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STATE LANDS

MONTANA NAVIGABLE WATER STUDY

Submitted to:
Montana Department of State Lands
Helena, Montana

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INTRODUCTION

The following report was prepared by Heritage Research Center for the Montana Department of State Lands under a professional services agreement dated March 5, 1986 and changes initialed March 18, 1986. The purpose of the contract was to provide the Department of State Lands, where possible, with a determination of commercial navigability and the extent of navigability for the purpose of determining title to streambeds of certain waterways.

Specific provisions of the agreement required that the contractor complete the following two projects:

1. A navigability and reach study focusing upon waterways east of the Continental Divide not reported upon in the 1974-1975 Army Corps of Engineers investigation and upon resources and writings made available since those Corps investigations.

2. A determination of the highest point of recorded navigation and stream segments historically navigated on the following list of 35 streams:

Big Blackfoot River	Madison River
Big Hole River	Milk River
Big Horn River	Missouri River
Bitterroot River	Montour Creek
Boulder River	Nine Mile Creek
Bull River	Rattlesnake Creek
Clark Fork of Columbia	Sheep Creek
Clearwater River	Smith River
Dearborn River	Stillwater River (West)
Flathead River - Including	Sun River
North, South and Middle Forks	
Fortine Creek/River	Swan River
Graves Creek	Teton River
Jefferson River	Tobacco River
Kootenai River	Tongue River
Little Blackfoot River	Whitefish River
Little Missouri River	Yaak River
Lolo Creek	Yellowstone River
Lower Gallatin River	

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Methodology:

Project #1

Navigability and reach study for waterways east of the Continental Divide not reported upon in the navigability reports prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1974-1975, and research into resources and writings made available since those investigations.

Heritage Research Center investigated the possibility of historical navigation on other streams east of the Continental Divide. The research focused upon streams not reported upon in earlier Corps of Engineer investigations, and upon resources/writings made available since those investigations. The study also included pertinent sources not recognized as applicable at the time of the Corps studies in the early 1970's. Gary Williams, principal investigator for the study, participated in researching and writing the original Corps reports for the waterways east of the Divide and provided insight into the methodology employed under those investigations.

Researchers first constructed a bibliography of local history writings produced for Eastern Montana since 1974. This task was greatly facilitated by Heritage Research Center's bibliography of Montana history on the firm's computer. A comprehensive list of published materials, including local histories, was compiled from the annual listing of Montana related publications in the Pacific Northwest Library Association Quarterly. The computer bibliography, the PNLA bibliography and a previously submitted bibliography of items recommended for further research projects from the Western Montana navigability research projects were combined to form the research bibliography appended to this report. These bibliographical entries were reviewed for instances of navigation and followed up with research into local newspapers whenever some instance of navigation was found.

Oral history collections at the Montana Historical Society and the K. Ross Toole Archives were reviewed for the study. Also, we consulted archival materials at each of those institutions. We consulted cultural resource managers in Eastern Montana in an attempt to identify reports or sites pertaining to navigation. Old photos and interviews also were included in the research. Newspapers were reviewed for special time periods or to confirm instances of commercial navigation identified from other sources. Interviews were conducted with knowledgeable sources identified during the course of the survey.

Materials researched for this project were applied to Project #2, whenever they seemed appropriate.

Following the research, we analyzed the information retrieved and prepared reports upon individual waterways. The record of historical navigation was written to include, whenever available, the specific segments of the waterway that were navigated.

Project #2

Determination of highest point of recorded navigation and stream segments historically navigated on 35 streams listed in the Statement of Work.

Included in the research for this project were thirty-five (35) streams identified as navigable by the Department of State Lands. For each of these streams researchers reviewed existing reports and extracted citations of historic navigation. They then consulted the original sources to determine, if possible, the segments of the waterways that were actually floated. Copies of reports in our offices, including those prepared for both districts of the Corps and those prepared by our firm, were used.

In addition to consulting the reports, researchers for Heritage Research Center reviewed the sources cited in "Bibliography of Materials Recommended for Further Research" that we submitted with our previous study on Western Montana waterways. When possible, we supplemented the written record with interviews and available tapes of long-time residents with knowledge of the waterways involved. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office and the various Forest Service archaeologists were consulted to determine whether cultural remains indicated the use of specific waterways. Requested evidence included interviews, splash dams, etc. (See Appendix of Forest Service Returns.)

Research sources included the extensive holdings of Heritage Research Center, the Mansfield Library and K. Ross Toole Archives, the Montana Historical Society, and the Kalispell Public Library.

The document contains a brief report on each waterway with a description of navigation as it pertains to specific stream segments. When it was not possible to determine the area of use, a statement to that effect would be made. As with the reports for the first project, we included a discussion of vague references to navigation that might provide clues to additional research, should it be required in the future.

Due to funding limitations, several exclusions were made from the research. County Courthouse records were excluded

because of travel and per diem costs, combined with the difficulty of determining in advance how extensive that research might be. Certain citations uncovered in the past have made references such as, "They put the logs in at John Does's place on Smith River." Property ownership records likely would indicate where John Doe owned property at the time of the log drives. Thus, one could establish the segment of the waterway that was navigated. Such information could be researched at a later date as it might become necessary for litigation purposes. Also, our researchers could not conduct thorough paper-by-paper research of local newspapers, because of the costly and time-consuming nature of that type of search. Instead, we read through newspapers when looking for a specific incident at a specific time.

Recommendations for Further Research:

Because the approach to documenting navigable waterways for title purposes has been constrained by lack of funding, efforts have been focused upon generating the most information for the least possible cost. Below are listed additional sources of information that could not be covered in previous investigations. While some were well-known, others were revealed in the course of the present study, notably the water rights records and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks classified trapper and outfitter records. The latter may become more useful in view of a recent district court ruling in Alaska pertaining to the Gulkana River. The Big Hole River, for example, lacks historical evidence of commercial navigation associated with logging or similar ventures, yet Fish, Wildlife and Parks officials report that it is subject to heavy commercial outfitter traffic.

Some further avenues of research include:

1. Search of the Department of Natural Resources Computerized water rights files was discussed with Ron Guse, Water Rights Bureau New Appropriations Program Manager, and Jim Kindle, Records Section Supervisor. Both agreed that there is some possibility for finding water reserves for navigation purposes. Since the files contain approximately 200,000 claims, the cost of the computer run could not be covered under the existing contract. Our own research indicated that at least some commercial logging enterprises filed for water rights to preserve in-stream flows for floating logs. An example is Rattlesnake Creek, tributary of the Clark Fork of the Columbia. The Water Rights Bureau records are classified by nature of use and point of diversion as well as other descriptions.

In contacting the DNRC chief Legal Counsel, Don MacIntyre, we learned that that office does not maintain files on navigable waterways since no such determinations are necessary for them to issue permits. The issue of navigability could arise on Federal

Energy Regulatory Commission (DNRC) applications, but DNRC's legal offices keep no separate records on navigable status.

2. Under a 1985 law, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has statutory responsibility for classifying Montana's streams to determine rights and restrictions of recreational access. Defined under the law are two classifications. The following discussion is taken directly from the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks brochure titled "Stream Access in Montana".

"Class I waters are defined as those which are capable of recreational use and have been declared navigable or which are capable of specific kinds of commercial activity, including commercial outfitting with multiperson watercraft. The Department has developed a preliminary list of rivers that meet at least one of the criteria listed in the law for class I rivers (see Section (1) (2) of the law). This preliminary list includes the mainstems of the following waters, as described:

Kootenai River Drainage:

- Kootenai River-from Libby Dam to the Idaho border
- Lake Creek-from the Chase cut-off road to its confluence with the Kootenai River
- Yaak River-from Yaak Falls to its confluence with the Kootenai River

Flathead River Drainage:

- South Fork of the Flathead-from Youngs Creek to Hungry Horse Reservoir
- Middle Fork of the Flathead-from Schaffer Creek to its confluence with the mainstem of the Flathead River
- North Fork of the Flathead-from the Canadian border to its confluence with the mainstem of the Flathead River
- Flathead River (mainstem)-to its confluence with the Clark Fork River

Clark Fork of the Columbia River Drainage:

- Clark Fork River-from Warm Spring Creek to the Idaho border
- North Fork of the Blackfoot-from Highway 200 east of Ovando to its confluence with the mainstem of the Blackfoot River
- Blackfoot River-from the Cedar Meadow Fishing Access Site west of Helmville to its confluence with the Clark Fork

Bitterroot River-from the confluence of the
East and West forks to its confluence
with the Clark Fork

Rock Creek-from the confluence of the West
Fork to its confluence with the Clark
Fork

Missouri River Drainage:

Missouri River-from Three Forks to the North
Dakota border

Beaverhead River-from Clark Canyon Dam to its
confluence with the Jefferson

Big Hole River-from Fishtrap Fishing Access
Site down-stream from Wisdom to its
confluence with the Jefferson

Gallatin River-from Taylors Fork to its
confluence with the Missouri

Jefferson River-to its confluence with the
Missouri

Madison River-from Quake Lake to its
confluence with the Missouri

Dearborn River-from the Highway 434 bridge to
its confluence with the Missouri

Sun River-from Gibson Dam to its confluence
with the Missouri

Smith River-from Camp Baker Fishing Access
Site near Ft. Logan to its confluence
with the Missouri

Marias River-from Tiber Dam to its confluence
with the Missouri

Judith River-from the confluence of Big
Spring Creek to its confluence with the
Missouri

Yellowstone River Drainage:

Yellowstone River-from Yellowstone National
Park to the North Dakota border

Bighorn River-from Yellowtail Dam to its
confluence with the Yellowstone

Tongue River-from Tongue River Dam to its
confluence with the Yellowstone

Keep in mind that this list is preliminary and that
other waters may be added to it in the future as other
criteria listed in the law for determining class I
waters are addressed. Also, keep in mind that there
may be times during a year when the flow and physical
condition of these waters may not permit their use for
certain kinds of recreation.

Class II waters are all rivers and streams capable of
recreational use that are not class I waters."

Our contacts with attorney Stan Bradshaw at Fish Wildlife, and Parks indicated that the Class I waters had been determined without reference to the Corps reports or other reports of navigable status. Instead, the Department relied entirely upon information pertaining to commercial outfitter and guide navigation on those streams. Pat Graham was involved in compiling the list of navigable streams for the brochure. Much of the information was derived from restricted-access files that would require permission from the department director for use. The value of these particular records in determining navigable segments and navigable status for title purposes appears to be underscored by the Gulkana River case in Alaska.

3. Many historical records could yet be reviewed for actual commercial use of Montana's waterways. Foremost among those would be local newspapers which yielded the greatest amount of information in the original Corps studies. No comprehensive newspaper research has been conducted for Western Montana, and many papers not consulted for the original Corps studies east of the Divide remain.

At some future time, the Department could undertake a comprehensive search of selected local newspapers to strengthen available documentation on navigable streams and, possibly, to determine other streams that had commercial use. For Western Montana that approach might involve a comprehensive search of newspapers for such towns as Kalispell, Missoula, Hamilton, Thompson Falls, and Libby from earliest publication dates to approximately 1930 when the last river drives took place. When encountering a particular stream that needs documentation, the first source should be the closest local newspaper.

As stated in earlier reports, much archival research also could be done. Particularly useful would be fur trade records in Canada and Forest Service records in Washington, D. C.

When attempting to document actual stream segments navigated, county land records and government survey notes and plats could prove valuable as noted in the Tongue River discussion.

Big Hole River

(Tributary of the Jefferson River)

There are few recorded instances of commercial navigation on the Big Hole River. The Lewis and Clark expedition traveled an indeterminate distance up and down the river in 1805. It appears that William Clark's party ascended no farther than present-day Divide, Montana, and probably were considerably short of that location. In 1881, ties were floated down part of the Big Hole River to be used in the construction of the Utah and Northern Railroad. [Source: The Dillon Tribune, July 23, 1881, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Big Hole River Navigation Study" prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, p. 7.] The 1881 Tribune article did not specify the section navigated, but the railroad probably would have reached Divide, Montana, at the time the new item appeared. Alva T. Noyes, who settled in the Big Hole Valley in 1887, stated that E. O. Packard floated ties from Steel Creek (near Wisdom, Montana) to Divide, Montana, during the spring of 1882. [Source: Alva J. Noyes, The Story of Ajax (New York:1966), pp. 51-52, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 7.]

Existing traffic of outfitters and guides constitutes a potential instance of commercial navigability. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Big Hole River a Class I navigable stream from Fishtrap Fishing Access Site downstream from Wisdom to its confluence with the Jefferson River because of its capacity for supporting this kind of commercial activity.

Summary: The historical evidence strongly suggests that ties were floated between the mouth of Steel Creek and Divide, Montana, in either the spring of 1881 or 1882.

Big Horn River

(Tributary of the Yellowstone River)

The Billings District Court declared that the Big Horn River was navigable in Crow Tribe vs. U. S., October 1, 1963. This includes all of the sections of the river in the State of Montana.

Charles LeRaye, a French Canadian who was captured by Indians, traveled an undetermined distance down the Big Horn River with the Indians in canoes for two days before reaching its mouth in 1801. [Source: Charles LeRaye, "The Journal of Charles LeRaye", in South Dakota Historical Collections, Vol. IV (Sioux Falls, S.D.: 1908), p. 175, as cited in Gary Williams and Alan Newell, "Big Horn River Navigability Study", (Riverton, Wyoming to Big Horn, Montana), pp. 4-5.] In 1825, William H. Ashley and party floated the Big Horn River in canoes, starting from either just above or below Upper Big Horn Canyon to the river's mouth. [Source: Harrison C. Dale, Ashley-Smith Explorations (Cleveland:1918), pp. 158-162, as cited in Williams and Newell, pp. 6-9.] In 1833, Charles Larpenteur and party descended the river in bull boats from about the same point. [Sources: Charles Larpenteur, Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri: The Personal Narration of Charles Larpenteur, ed. by Elliot Coues (New York:1898), p. 35, as cited in Williams and Newell, pp. 9-10.]

Captain B.L.E. Bonneville and party made the same trip in three bull boats in 1833 and Nathaniel Wyeth in one bull boat the same year, transporting furs down the Big Horn [Sources: Washington Irving, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, ed. by Edgeley Todd (Norman, OK:1961), and Nathaniel J. Wyeth, The Correspondence and Journals of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth, 1831-36, ed. by F. G. Young (Eugene, OR:1899), pp. 209-212, as cited in Williams and Newell, pp. 10-11.]

Shortly after the construction of Fort C. F. Smith (just below the mouth of Big Horn Canyon) in 1866, a log-cutting party, including Finn Burnett, hauled a 16-foot boat from the Fort to about present-day Lovell, Wyoming, where the Stinking Water River (Shoshone) enters the Big Horn. The Burnett party conducted log drives from that point to a boom near the Fort. [Source: Robert Beeke David, Finn Burnett: Frontiersman (Glendale, CA:1936), pp. 199-206, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 12.] In 1879, two miners transported mining implements, provisions, guns and ammunition in a 12-foot-long boat from above the Big Horn Canyon to Miles City. [Source: Yellowstone Journal, (Miles City) August 7, 1897, p. 2, as cited in Williams and Newell, pp. 12-13.]

The first steamboat navigation on the Big Horn began in

1876, when the steamboat, the Far West, traveled up the Big Horn River to a point about 15 miles beyond the mouth of the Little Big Horn River, where it took on soldiers wounded in the Reno fight. It moved them from that point down the Big Horn, Yellowstone, and Missouri Rivers to Bismarck and Fort Abraham Lincoln in 54 hours. [Source: Hiram Martin Chittenden, History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River: Life and Adventures of Joseph LaBarge (Minneapolis, MN:1962), pp. 387-390, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 13.]

Steamboat traffic continued up that section of the river between the mouth of the Big Horn and the mouth of the Little Big Horn between 1877 (and the construction of Fort Custer at the mouth of the Little Big Horn) and 1882, when the railroad arrived in the Yellowstone Valley. The Report of the Chief of Engineers for 1879 regarded the Yellowstone and Big Horn Rivers as "the main line of transportation connecting the two large posts, Forts Keogh and Custer with the East." [Source: U.S. Congress, House, Report of the Chief of Engineers, Ex.Doc. 1, part 2, vol. 2, part 2, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., 1879, p. 1100, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 14.]

Steamboats were used while Fort Custer was being constructed. General W. T. Sherman took the steamer Rosebud from Bismarck to Fort Custer in 1877. [Source: John Gordon MacDonald, "History of Navigation on the Yellowstone," unpublished M.A. Thesis (University of Montana:1950); U.S. Department of Defense Report of Country North of Union Pacific Railroad by Philip A. Sheridan and W. T. Sherman (Washington, D.C.:1878), p. 30; Richard Upton, ed., Fort Custer on the Big Horn 1877-1898 (Glendale, CA:1973), p. 35, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 14.] General Philip A. Sheridan, also at Fort Custer in 1877, noted five steamboats at Fort Custer while it was being constructed. [Source: Sheridan and Sherman Report, p. 5.] Steamboats that supplied Fort Custer included the Sherman, the F.Y. Bachelor, and the Josephine. [Source: Sheridan & Sherman Report, p. 29; Charles U. Bachelor, Incidents in My Life (Pittsburg, PA:1887), pp. 102-104; MacDonald, p. 123; Upton, pp. 254-255, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 16.] The construction of an irrigation dam at Intake, Montana, ended commercial steamboat navigation in the Yellowstone and Big Horn regions (Williams and Newell, p. 17).

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Big Horn River as a Class I navigable stream from Yellowtail Dam to its confluence with the Yellowstone River.

Summary: The Big Horn River has been navigated in connection with the fur trade from its headwaters in Wyoming to its mouth. Log drives have occurred from Lovell, Wyoming, to the lower end of lower Big Horn Canyon. Steamboats have travelled up as far as 15 miles above the mouth of the Little Big Horn River.

Bitterroot River

(Tributary of the Clark Fork of the Columbia)

The Bitterroot River was the subject of a navigability assessment by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (report copy on file at Montana Department of State Lands, Helena). That report, titled "Report on Navigability of the Bitterroot River, Montana," concluded that the Bitterroot River "is navigable in fact" based upon evidence consisting largely of past log drives and present recreational boating. While the Corps could find no evidence that the commerce conducted on the Bitterroot River was interstate in nature, the research for our earlier study for the Department of State Lands Western Montana navigability project included mill records for the company operating that mill and suggesting that lumber was transported out of state. Much of the documentation employed by the Corps to reach its decision of navigability for commerce regulation purposes applies as well to the issue of navigability for title purposes.

The historical documentation of navigation on the Bitterroot River includes references to floating nearly the entire length of the stream, but the preponderance of use was in the upper reaches where logs were transported from Fern Creek, Tin Cup Creek, and possibly other tributaries to the sawmill in Hamilton. A general description of the river basin as suited to log drives was published in the 1897-98 annual report of the United States Geological Survey. John Leiberg's report on the Bitterroot Forest Reserve in that year concluded the following:

The merchantable timber in the reserve is comparatively easy of access, and can all readily be logged. The canyons from the West Fork northward usually have a spring freshet high enough to float logs into the main river, and are mostly clear enough from boulders to permit driving as far up as the yellow pine extends. The West Fork, Little West Fork, Little South Fork, and the main South Fork all have deep enough water in the spring to drive on. [Source: John Leiberg, "Bitterroot Forest Reserve", Nineteenth Annual Report of the U.S.G.S. of the Department of the Interior, 1897-1898. Part V: Forest Reserves, p. 275.]

The Western News (Hamilton) reported as early as 1891 a "large log drive on the Bitterroot River to Hamilton." [Source: Western News, March 17, 1891; June 16, 1891; and August 11, 1891.] The log drives continued through 1898, and possibly beyond 1900. The Bitterroot Bugle (Hamilton) reported spring log drives down the Bitterroot River to Hamilton, originated partially from the Kendall Brothers' logging camp on the West Fork. [Source: Bitterroot Bugle, February 25, March 25, June 24, and July 15, 1893.] The Western News of the following year

indicated that log drives on the river originated on Fern Creek and on Tin Cup Creek. [Western News, April 18, May 16, May 23, and June 13, 1894]. Those papers carried similar articles for 1896 and 1897. In 1897 the Western News also reported that a man had drowned on the "subsidiary drive" down Sawtooth Creek, another tributary to the Bitterroot River that flowed directly into the mill pond at Hamilton. [Western News, May 19, 1897.] The same paper also carried a story in 1897 indicating that another log drive to the Hamilton mill encountered problems when the water went down with the rear of the drive nearly opposite Grantsdale. [Western News, June 9, 1897.] In 1898 the Ravalli Republican (Hamilton?) noted a new logging camp on Big Creek (November 30, 1898), the beginning of the annual log drive down the Bitterroot River starting at the forks of the river near Rye Creek (April 27, 1898), and a reference to most of the season's logs coming on a spring drive out of the "Rock creek district." (April 20, 1898).

Bitterroot Trails (pp. 104-105) includes a section written by Lena Sherrill that says that Grant Shook operated a logging camp on the East Fork of the Bitterroot River at Shook Gulch from 1890 to 1896. The article states that logs were cut at that location during the winter and floated on the river to the Hamilton mill in the spring. The article also stated that the drive started at "Jennings camp", and many people along the river cut logs and floated them in with the drive.

Other segments of the Bitterroot River had been navigated in earlier times. In 1853, for example, Dr. George Suckley floated the river from Fort Owen to its mouth, and on down the Clark Fork to Lake Pend Oreille in an attempt to record features of the water route for the railroad survey expedition commanded by Governor Isaac I. Stevens. Suckley and three aides began the trip on October 15 and accomplished the feat in a boat constructed of hides stretched over a frame. [Source: Isaac I. Stevens, Reports of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean: 1853-5, U.S. House of Representatives, Ex. Doc. No 56, 36th Cong., 1st sess, Vol. XII Book I, p. 161.]

On July 15, 1875, The Weekly Missoulian recorded that 25,000 feet of lumber cut at the Squires mill on Sweathouse Creek, just west of Victor, was floated as a raft measuring 16' by 80' on the Bitterroot River to Missoula for construction at the new fairgrounds. Similarly, The Missoulian reported on April 21, 1882, that the Quartermaster at Fort Missoula had a boom built on the Bitterroot River near the Fort to catch logs floated down the river from the Lolo area, approximately 11 miles above the mouth of the river. (This information derived from the Corps of Engineers report cited above and from a citation in the Phillip Papers at the Toole Archives.)

The Weekly Missoulian contained an article on September 7, 1883, describing a float trip from Stevensville to Missoula on the Bitter Root Girl, a boat of unspecified dimensions. The article claimed that the only obstacles to navigation were accumulations of brush that collected on trees which had fallen across the river. It also mentioned a similar trip by a man named Frank Ives who transported his family in a rowboat down the Bitterroot River to Missoula a year or two prior to the sailing of the Bitter Root Girl.

Additional navigation on the Bitterroot has included recreational boating and floating in connection with trapping. The Corps of Engineers report cited above includes mention of trapping with the use of a boat for four years on the stream between the confluence of the East and West Forks downstream to Missoula.

Summary: The Bitterroot River has been navigated its entire length in connection with commercial logging and lumbering, commercial trapping, recreational boating, and boating for transportation. The highest points of navigation would be those associated with the early log drives from the East Fork and the West Fork.

Blackfoot River

(Tributary of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River)

There is an early instance of documented navigation of the Blackfoot River in the Helena Herald. A March 15, 1870 issue states that:

Henry Buck and others built three boats to go from Lincoln on Blackfoot River to Cedar Creek Mines but floated only as far as Frenchtown and packed the rest of the way. [Source: Helena Herald, March 15, 1870, as cited in Audra Browman, "Some ways in which Clark Fork, Bitterroot and Blackfoot Rivers have been used in the Past," February, 1974.]

Most of the earliest instances of documented commercial navigability occurred in association with the logging operation of Eddy, Hammond and Company and its successors, which contracted to provide most of the wood products necessary for construction and operation of the Northern Pacific Railroad in the Missoula region. The company became part of the Montana Improvement Company, a major supplier of the Northern Pacific Railroad, in 1882. It built a mill at the confluence of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers in 1886 and began to drive logs down to the Blackfoot River that year. The first log drive in 1886 totalled 20 million board feet of timber floated from about 25 miles upstream [Source: Jean Ratigan, "Early Lumber Activity - Bonner Mill," in A Grass Roots Tribute: The Story of Bonner, Montana, Bonner Public School, Bonner, Montana, 1976, pp. 7-11.]

Hammond, Ely and Company cut much of their timber in the Potomac area, starting in about 1885. The first logging camp in the Ovando area was located at Fish Creek, which is about 40 miles upstream from Bonner. Oxen were used to skid the logs to landings, where they were loaded onto horse-drawn drays, and drawn never more than two miles to the Blackfoot River. The 20 million board foot log drive in 1886 to the Bonner mill came from the Fish Creek log camp. In 1887, Ernest Kilburn, who ran his own contract logging outfit, logged Montour Creek, north of Ovando, and floated logs down Montour Creek and the Blackfoot River to the Bonner mill. Kilburn logged in the Elk Creek area, east of Greenough, in 1891 and carried his logs by sleigh to the Blackfoot River and presumably floated them down the Blackfoot to Bonner. Kilburn also logged Frazier Creek, south of Ovando, from 1891 to 1895, and logged "all along the south bank of the Blackfoot in that area." Presumably, he floated the logs down the Blackfoot to Bonner. Altogether, these early logging operations along the Blackfoot and its tributaries during the days of ox logging lasted from 1885 to 1899. [Source: Interviews with Ralph Kilburn, son of Ernest Kilburn, by Clarence

Strong, 1972, and by David Crabtree, 1975, as referenced in David Crabtree, "Logging in Lubrecht Forest Prior to 1934," Senior Thesis, University of Montana, 1975, pp. 9-13, p. 53.]

In 1898 the Anaconda Company purchased the Big Blackfoot Milling Company, and logging on the Blackfoot River centered around the Potomac Valley as timber along the Blackfoot River was depleted. Horses, an elaborate system of chutes, and logging railroads were used to transport logs from the Potomac Valley to McNamara's landing. From there the logs were transported down the Blackfoot River to Bonner. Logging camps were located on Union Creek, Arkansas Creek, and Potomac proper. [Source: Ibid., pp. 16-18; Bob Bateman, Big Blackfoot Railway (Deer Lodge: Platten Press, 1980), Chapter 2.]

Logging drives from the west Potomac Valley ran from 1904 to 1911, at which time the Milwaukee Railroad completed the Blackfoot extension to McNamara's landing. (Crabtree, p. 17.) Logging operations on the lower Blackfoot involving log drives on the Blackfoot resumed in 1927 when the Anaconda Company began logging at Greenough, Montana. These operations involved most of the land that is now part of the Lubrecht Experimental Forest. Logs were floated from Greenough logging camps from 1927-1928. The 1927 drive contained 60 million board feet. The 1928 drive was smaller and was the last log drive down the Blackfoot (Crabtree, p. 53).

The other sustained period of log drives down the Blackfoot River involved the Anaconda Company's Seeley Lake operations between 1907 and 1911. During this period, logs were floated down the Clearwater River and across Salmon Lake to the mouth of the Clearwater River and down the Blackfoot River to Bonner (see section on Clearwater River, this report.)

The highest documented point of navigation on the Blackfoot River appears in a 1904 article in the Missouliau which refers to a log drive of 50 million board feet to the Bonner mill from a point about 80 miles up the Blackfoot River [Source: Missouliau, May 31, 1904, p. 3.]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Big Blackfoot River a navigable stream from Cedar Meadow Fishing Access site west of Helmville to its confluence with the Clark Fork River.

Summary: There is a recorded instance of navigation of the Blackfoot River by boats from Lincoln to the river's mouth by log drives from about 80 miles up the river to the Bonner Mill near the river's mouth.

Boulder River

(Tributary of the Yellowstone River)

Commercial navigation of the Boulder River was associated with the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1882. In 1883 and 1884, ties were floated down the Boulder and West Boulder Rivers, at a time Messieurs Seeley and Kilroy were cutting timber in the area. [Source: Avant Courier, August 3, 1882, as cited in Gary Williams and Alan Newell, "Boulder River Navigation Study," prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, p. 5.] A U.S. Geological Survey report noted major timber cuttings in Township 3 South, Range 11 East on the West Boulder River, and Township 6 South, Range 12 East on the main section of the Boulder River. [Source: U.S. Geological Survey, Professional Paper 29, Forest Conditions in the Absaroka Division of Yellowstone Forest Reserve, p. 26, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 5.] These locations put the timber cutting areas and presumably the points from which the ties were floated near the mouth of Basin Creek on the West Boulder River and near the mouth of Four Mile Creek on the main branch of the Boulder River. [Source: U.S.G.S. Professional Paper No. 29, pp. 36 & 71.]

Summary: Historical evidence strongly suggests that ties were floated down the West Boulder River from the mouth of Basin Creek and down the main stem of the Boulder River from Four Mile Creek.

Bull River

(Tributary of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River)

Log drives occurred on Bull River from at least 1887 to 1925. Many of these drives probably originated near the headwaters of the river.

A November 22, 1972 article in the Missoulian refers to several drives down Bull River, at least one of which began near Bull Lake. [Source: Missoulian, November 22, 1972, Item 72 in Clarence Strong Papers.]

As early as 1887, Frank Berray helped build dams that were used to control water flow for moving timber down Bull River. One was at the Berray's place, and another at the old Dryden place." According to the article, the river "had been driven in the late 1880's for ties and shingle bolts." Apparently about the same time, Swan Swanson floated shingle bolts down the river to the Clark Fork where they were boomed to Smead's mill.

About 1904-1905, the Hope Lumber Company "took a big drive down the river.

The article also mentioned Joe Irvine driving out poles cut in the Spar Lake area by Tri-State. The logs were hauled to Bull Lake where they [Tri-State] dumped them into the lake, planning on cutting a channel from Bull Lake to Bull River. That was not permitted, so they were hauled from the lake to Bull River. However, the company had a difficult time getting them out because the delay resulted in butting the poles in during a low water stage. (Ibid.) The logs were driven beyond Heron where they ran aground.

This drive probably occurred in the middle 1910's. A May 1914 issue of The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman notes that:

On the J. H. Irvine sale at Bull Lake the operators have completed the second year cut on a five-year contract. They have cut up to date 2 1/2 million feet of white pine and 7,000 cedar poles. Owing to the fact that the operators could not secure a siding at Troy, a large part of the Cedar products is being taken out down Bull River and landed in Lake Pend Oreille. [Source: The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman, May 1914, p. 69, item 7.]

The 1972 Missoulian article also mentions that Harry Talmadge had a post drive down Bull River for Bill Higgins in 1914. Clifford R. Weare also took two drives down Bull River in about 1923 and 1924. Frank Berray worked a boat during drives in

1924 and 1925, which carried logs to A.C. White's mill at La Clede on the Pend Oreille River in Idaho. [Source: Missoulian, November 22, 1972, item 72 in Clarence Strong Papers, Miscellaneous clippings.]

Summary: Commercial navigation on Bull River has consisted of numerous log drives between 1887 and 1925 from just south of Bull Lake to the river's confluence with the Clark Fork River.

Clark Fork River

(Tributary of the Columbia River)

The Clark Fork River has been navigated from Deer Lodge, Montana, to its mouth on Pend Oreille Lake, Idaho. Early instances of navigation on the Clark Fork included at least 2 canoe trips 1809-11) of David Thompson of the British North West Company from Salesh or Flathead House near the mouth of Thompson River) to the mouth of the Clark Fork River at Pend Oreille Lake Kullyspell House). [Source: M. Catherine White, ed. David Thompson's Journals Relating to Montana and Adjacent Regions, 1808-1812 (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1950), pp. c-cxx and 43-222; Olga Weydemeyer Johnson, Flathead and Kootenay (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1969) pp. 57-58, 181, 185-186 as cited in U. S. Army Corps of Engineers District, "Report on Navigability of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River, Idaho and Montana", circa 1975 p. 11.]

Another early example of navigation of the Clark Fork River involved the expedition of Governor Issac S. Stevens to survey a railroad route to the Pacific Coast. Dr. George Suckley, who was charged with exploring the Clark Fork River, travelled down the Bitterroot River and from its mouth down the Clark Fork to a Jesuit mission located on the north end of Pend Oreille Lake. They travelled down the Clark Fork in three boats made with bullock hides stretched over frames. [Source: James McClellan Hamilton, From Wilderness to Statehood, A History of Montana, (Portland: Binford and Mort, 1957) p. 114, as cited in U. S. Army Corps, "Clark Fork River Navigability Report," p. 12.]

In the Spring of 1860, W. W. Delacy, a member of the Mullan Road exploration crew floated two flat-bottomed boats from about 10 miles above the river's confluence with the Flathead River to the Flathead River, which he ascended to the mouth of Plum Creek. [Source: Margaret Hahn, In Retrospect: A History of Mineral County, (Superior, MT: Mineral Publishing Company, 1985) pp. 9-10.]

Much more use was made of the Clark Fork River during the 1860's with the construction of the Mullan Road and the discovery of gold in Western Montana. The river served to transport passengers and freight in a variety of river craft. Starting in the 1880's logs used primarily for railroad ties and mine structures were floated on the river. Between 1865 and 1870, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company operated a steamboat line between Pend Oreille Lake and Thompson Falls. To take advantage of the traffic traveling between the Upper Missouri and Columbia Rivers at Walla Walla the company built the Mary Moody in 1865, and in 1866 navigated the river to Cabinet Landing, just inside the Montana border. In 1867, the company began navigating the river

in the Cabinet from Cabinet Landing to Rock Island Rapids near Noxon) and in the Missoula from there to Thompson Falls, the head of steamboat navigation. These trips continued until 1870. [Sources: Merrill G. Burlingame and K. Ross Toole, A History of Montana, (New York: Lewis Histories Publishing Company, Inc., 1957), Vol. II, p. 70. As cited in U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Clark Fork River Navigability Report," p. 13. Other references to steamboat traffic on the Clark Fork during this time include The Montana Almanac, 1959-60, Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1958, p. 252; Rocky Mountain Gazette, August 18, 1866; Helena Herald, May 2, 1867, June 5, 1867, September 12, 1867, February 13, 1868; Deer Lodge Independent, June 19, 1868; E. W. Wright, Lewis & Dryden's Marine History of the Pacific Northwest, first published 1895 by Lewis & Dryden Printing Co. and reprinted 1867 by Superior Publishing Co., Seattle, Washington. Steamboat navigation also is discussed in Evelyn M. Davis, "Steamboats Once Operated on Clark Fork River", which appeared in the Sanders County Ledger, February 6, 1958.]

Other forms of navigation occurred on the Clark Fork River during the 1860's and 1870's. Mail was carried by boat from Deer Lodge to Missoula in 1866. [Source: Missoula Pioneer, July 13, 1872 and New Northwest July 13, 1872, as cited in Audra Browman, "Some Ways in Which the Clark Fork, Bitterroot and Blackfoot Rivers Have Been Used in the Past", 1974, and U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Clark Fork River Navigability Report," p. 13.] The same year, two men who went upstream to the mouth of the Blackfoot river to build a ferryboat drowned while riding a raft downstream to Missoula [Source: Frank Woody, History of Missoula County and City, 1897, as cited in Browman and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "Clark Fork River Navigability Report," p. 13.] In 1870, Henry Buck and others constructed three boats and floated from Lincoln on the Blackfoot River to its confluence with the Clark Fork and from there to Frenchtown on the way to mines at Cedar Creek Mines near Superior. They packed their goods from Frenchtown to the mines. [Source: Helena Herald, March 15, 1890 as cited in Browman U. S. Army Corps "Clark Fork River Navigability Report," p. 13.]

Also in 1870, Richard Barry constructed boats for Sam Johns "from Deer Lodge to captain at least as far" as Moose Creek there is a Moose Creek about 5 miles west of Alberton). Sam Johns started the first trip on the Kangaroo in May and the boat made more than one trip, presumably as far as Moose Creek. [Source: New Northwest, May 6, 1870; December 16, 1870, Missoula and Cedar Creek Pioneer, December 8, 1870, as cited in Browman, p. 1.] A March 2, 1871 article in the Missoula Pioneer noted that

Thomas D. Beeke and J. L. Hodge left Frenchtown on Sunday last in an open boat, and . . . arrived at the mouth of Quartz [creek] about midway between Alberton and Superior) on Tuesday evening without accident.

This, in connection with the cruise of the Kangaroo last season, and the uninterrupted transportation of hay and lumber between the mouth of Cedar [Creek] about 1 mile west of Superior) and the Missoula Ferry demonstrates the practicability of navigating the Deer Lodge, Hellgate and Missoula rivers from Deer Lodge City to Pend Oreille. [Source: The Missoula Pioneer, March 2, 1871 as cited in Heritage Research Center, "Report on Western Montana Historical Navigation", prepared for the Montana Department of State Lands, 1984, p. 40.]

Other 1871 newspaper items referred to boats and rafts traveling from Missoula to Superior and to boats carrying hay and lumber from St. Regis to the mines. [Source: New Northwest, March 4, 1870, Missoula Pioneer, February 24, 1871.] In 1872, a surveying party of Northern Pacific Railroad travelled by boat from Missoula to the confluence of the Clark Fork and Flathead Rivers near Paradise, Montana. [Source: Browman, 1974, p. 3.]

In the early 1880's when the Northern Pacific Railroad was constructing its line to the Pacific coast, it contracted with the Eddy Hammond Company to provide timber for ties between the Little Blackfoot and the Idaho line. Mills were constructed at the confluence of the Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers and at several other locations on the Clark Fork. [Source: Missouliau, August 19 and 26, 1881 as cited in Browman, p. 3.] Supplies for the Company were carried down the Flathead River and Clark Fork River by bateaux and up the Clark Fork from Cabinet Landing to Thompson Falls by steamboat. In 1882, lumber was rafted down the Clark Fork, and, during the winter of that year, it was transported on ice between the construction camps. (Missouliau, November 11, 1881, May 19, 1882, June 9 and 30, 1882, July 7, 1882, August 18, 1882, September 8 and 29, 1882 and February 9, 1883 as cited in U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Clark Fork River Navigability Report," p. 15.) A February 24, 1882 item in the Missouliau refers to logs being floated down the Missoula and Pend Oreille Rivers to Weeksville. [Source: the Missouliau, February 24, 1882.]

From 1900 to 1925, drives occurred on the Clark Fork River, originating on Nine Mile Creek, White Pine Creek, Trout Creek, Vermilion River and Bull River. According to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Clark Fork Navigability Study, most of the logs that were driven down these tributaries were floated down the Clarks Fork River to the town of Clark Fork in Idaho. From there they were towed on Pend Oreille Lake to Dover or to the Hope Lumber Company plant at Hope, Idaho. A 1907 item in the Sander County Ledger, (Thompson Falls) stated that:

the Hope Lumber Company's men arrived here last week to

drive the logs out along the river between Eddy and the Idaho line to Hope. The men expect that it will take about four weeks to complete the drive. [Source: Sanders County Ledger, April 19, 1907 as cited in Heritage Research Center "Report on Western Montana Historical Navigations" prepared for the Montana Department of State Lands, 1984, p. 46.]

Another entry in the Sanders County Ledger in 1914 mentioned expert loggers breaking up a log jam at Heron, with the intention of driving "the logs down the river to the sorting works at the mouth of the river." (Pend Oreille Lake), [Source: Sanders County Ledger, March 13, 1914, as cited in Heritage Research Center, "Report on Western Montana Historical Navigation", prepared for the Montana Department of State Lands pp. 47-48.] The log drives down the Clark Fork from Missoula during these years carried from 10 to 50 million board feet per year. Correspondence with Clarence C. Strong of Missoula and Floyd W. Viche of Mineral County Commissioner's office at Superior, Montana, February - March 1974 as cited in U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Clark Fork River Navigability Report."

In 1910 in Steele, Lenham and Maker vs. the Northwest Development Company and Edward Donlan, the U. S. Court determined Clark Fork at the Columbia River is a non-navigable river, and that at the time the Northwest Development Company was owner of both banks of the river as it flows through the whole of Township 21 North, Range 29 West, that the Company was the sole owner of the river bed in that township. [Source: Sanders County Ledger, July 22, 1910 as cited in Heritage Research Center "Report on Western Montana Historic Navigation" prepared for Montana Department of State Lands, 1984, p. 47.]

In 1932 the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, designated the Clark Fork River between its mouth at Pend Oreille Lake to the Northern Pacific Railway bridge near the town of Clark Fork a distance of about 4 miles) as a navigable waterway. [Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "Clark Fork Navigability Report," p. 9.]

The "Report on Navigability of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River" prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in about 1975, regarded the Clark Fork as a navigable waterway as far upstream as the mouth of the Blackfoot River. It did not consider the river above the mouth of the Blackfoot as capable of navigation.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Clark Fork River a navigable waterway from Warm Springs, about 15 miles South of Deer Lodge) Idaho border.

Summary: There are recorded instances of the Clark Fork River being navigated in small boats from as high up as Deer Lodge, Montana. Log drives began west of Missoula and ran down the river to the river's mouth at Lake Pend Oreille. Thompson Falls was the historical head of steamboat navigation.

Clark Fork of the Yellowstone River

(Rock Creek Tributary)

A local history publication, Red Lodge, Saga of a Western Area, contains several references to commercial floating of logs on Rock Creek, a tributary of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River. A photo caption on page 26, for example, states:

Logs were stockpiled for the mines at the prop yards. In the spring during high water they were floated down Rock Creek to the mill pond which covered a large area in the vicinity of the Bearcreek Bridge on the south edge of Red Lodge. Small coal cars transported the logs to the mine....

Another reference on page 141 says:

B.M. Rogers had the contract to furnish timber for the mines for several years. He had a crew of men cutting timber during the summer and winter months, and they would place the timber along the creek bank. In the Spring, before the high water, he would build a diversion dam or boom, near where the Zoo was located to divert the water down a side stream to a pond near the hillside, east of the creek. They would float the timber down the creek during high water, and then later it would be sorted and moved to the prop yard south of the mine. One year while we lived east of the creek, the dam broke and the timber went down the main stream. I can remember standing by the stream and watching the timber float down the creek. They spent most of the summer gathering the timber and hauling it back to the mine....

Yet another reference is found on page 346. Speaking of Ernest Loss, an Italian who moved to Red Lodge in 1913, the book presents the following:

He found work in the East Side Mine and later in the newer West Side Mine. He was paid 37 cents a ton and worked ten hours a day - the average miner made about \$2.50 a day. When work was slow in the mines he went to the mountains above the Main Fork of Rock Creek and cut timber for B.M. Rogers. He was paid 17 cents a log, delivered to the creek. Logs were pulled by horses to the creek and then floated downstream to be used in the mines. ...

These references seem to indicate that the floating of mine timbers on the Rock Creek tributary of the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone occurred over a period of at least several years. The

highest point of navigation discussed in the references would be "above the Main Fork of Rock Creek", and the navigated segment reaching to Red Lodge.

Clearwater River

(Tributary of the Blackfoot River)

There is considerable evidence of commercial navigation of the Clearwater River from Seeley Lake to the mouth of the river. Most of this occurred between 1907 and 1912, when the Big Blackfoot Milling Company logged Forest Service timber at the south end of Seeley Lake and floated logs down the Clearwater River, across Salmon Lake, and down the Clearwater and Blackfoot Rivers to the company's mill in Bonner. Primary and secondary sources provide information about these log drives.

A letter of 1906 from Kenneth Ross, manager of the Big Blackfoot mill, to Page S. Bunker, forest supervisor in Kalispell, expressed the company's interest in knowing "what arrangement could be made for securing timber from this [Seeley Lake] section." In the same letter Ross stated that:

We would hope to secure no less than one hundred million feet of stumpage from the district named, as it will be necessary in order to assure enough water to drive these logs to Bonner . . . to put in an investment of about \$25,000 in construction of splash dams, etc. . . . [Source: Letter, Kenneth Ross, Manager, Big Blackfoot Milling Company, to Page S. Bunker, Register in Charge, Kalispell, Montana, June 29, 1906. Anaconda Forest Product Papers, (AFPP) C#57, Box 15, Book 41, p. 383, University of Montana Archives.]

These operations began in 1907, and subsequent letters of Kenneth Ross to the Forest Supervisor in Kalispell and Missoula dated January 23, 1908 and January 25, 1910, respectively, refer to the practice of floating logs from Seeley Lake to the Big Blackfoot Company mill in Bonner. [Source: Letter, Kenneth Ross, Manager, Big Blackfoot Milling Company, to Page S. Bunker, Forest Supervisor, Kalispell, Montana, January 23, 1908 and September 16, 1908, Book 54, p. 266, AFPP, C#57, University of Montana Archives; and Letter, Kenneth Ross, manager, to Forest Supervisor, Missoula, January 25, 1910, Box 25, Book 70, p. 183, AFPP, C#57, University of Montana Archives.]

John Toole, Missoula historian, and a 1967 economic impact study of the Swan-Clearwater Valley provide good overviews of the history of logging operations and log drives in the Seeley Lake area from 1907-1911. Both accounts are based on information provided by Donald Mackenzie, who participated in the last log drive down the Clearwater in 1911. [Sources: John Toole, "Other Days," undated and uncited newspaper article in Montana Clippings file, Montana Public Library; Lawrence J. Hunt, Kent J. Adair, and Daniel R. Blake, "The Economic Impact of State Highway 209 on

the Swan-Clearwater Valley, October 1967, prepared for the Montana Highway Commission by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, School of Business Administration, University of Montana.] The U.S. Forest Service awarded the Big Blackfoot Milling Company a contract to cut 50 million board feet of saw timber on 5,440 acres of land in 1907. The area was logged in the winter by horses and hauled to the south end of Seeley Lake, from where the logs were floated down the Clearwater River". (Ibid.)

The log drives presented great difficulties, however, because the Clearwater River was too small to handle large logs, the company constructed a series of splash dams. These backed up the water into Seeley Lake. When the water was high enough, the dams were dynamited in sequence to provide sufficient water to float the logs to Salmon Lake, where they were "handwenched across the lake to the final leg of the Clearwater River". (Ibid.)

The system was expensive and time consuming. Logs sank to the bottom of Seeley Lake while waiting to be floated, large logs and rocks created numerous log jams that had to be dynamited, and the hand wenching of logs across Salmon Lake was made even more difficult by winds that blew up the lake. According to Toole, the company lost money on the operations and ceased them in 1911. Nonetheless, millions of board feet of timber were floated from Seeley Lake to the mouth of the Clearwater River between 1907 and 1911. See also Gary D. Williams, "Seeley Lake Historical Navigability Assessment", submitted to the Montana Department of State Lands, July 1983, for other secondary accounts of the Swan Lake-Clearwater River timber operations.)

Summary: Commercial navigation in the form of log drives occurred on the Clearwater River between Seeley Lake and the mouth of the river between 1907 and 1912,

Dearborn River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

There are recorded instances of floating ties down the Dearborn River, but it is not known where the highest point of navigation is located. In 1887, about 100,000 ties were floated from above Dearborn Canyon to the confluence of the river with the Missouri River. The ties were used in the construction of the Montana Central Railroad from Helena to Great Falls. [Source: (Great Falls) Tribune, September 22, 1887, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Dearborn River Navigation Study," prepared for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, p. 3.] An 1899-1900 forest survey indicates that ties were logged in the headwaters of the Dearborn River, west of longitude 112°30', and within the Forest Reserve. [Source: H. B. Ayres, "Lewis and Clark Forest Reserve, Montana," Twenty-First Report. U.S. Geological Survey, Part V, Forest Reserve 1899-1900 (Washington, D.C.:1900), pp. 46-51, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 3.]

The Great Falls Lumber Company also floated at least 700,000 board feet of logs down the Dearborn River in 1888 and 1889. [Source: (Great Falls) Tribune, May 9, 1888 and June 4, 1889, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 4.] However, the newspaper articles did not indicate where the timber was logged or the points from which the logs were floated. The company could have logged along the lower 17 miles of the river, which is "moderately timbered," or at its headwaters Newell and Williams, p. 4).

In 1984, the Montana Supreme Court, on appeal of the District Court decision regarding navigability of the Dearborn River (Montana Coalition for Stream Access, Inc., Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the State of Montana, and the Montana Department of State Lands vs. Dennis Michael Curran), upheld the District Court, ruling that state-owned water of the Dearborn River is navigable and further ruled that under the public trust doctrine and the Montana Constitution, any waters capable of use for recreational purposes are available for such purposes by the public irrespective of streambed ownership. The Supreme Court upheld the District Court ruling that the Dearborn was navigable on the basis of the log floating test for navigability under the federal test of navigability for title purposes, although the Supreme Court clearly stated that for the purposes of determining navigability on the basis of recreational use, fulfillment of this test was irrelevant. The District Court ruled that the Dearborn River fulfilled the federal test of navigability for title purposes, based on evidence of log drives in 1887-1889. [Sources: The Missoulian, December 11, 1982, December 23, 1982; May 10, 17, 1984; Montana State Supreme Court Decision, No. 83-164. In the Supreme Court of the State of

Montana, 1984 (Montana Criterion for Stream Access, Inc., Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the State of Montana, and the Montana Department of State Lands vs. Dennis Michael Curran).]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Dearborn River from the Highway 434 bridge to its confluence with the Missouri River as a Class I navigable river. exactly.

Summary: Historic evidence strongly suggests that the Dearborn River was used for log drives from about its headwaters or from a point about 17 miles above its mouth to its confluence with the Missouri River. A 1984 Montana Supreme Court ruling held that the Dearborn River is navigable because its waters are capable of being used for recreational purposes and that the river is also navigable under the federal log floating test.

Flathead River, North Fork

(Tributary of the Flathead River)

Commercial navigation on the North Fork of the Flathead River involved the transportation of coal and log drives. In 1883, a cable raft powered by a donkey engine, brought coal "down from the Upper North Fork and transported the coal as far south as the Flathead Lake where it was then loaded on lake boats and shipped on to various points". [Source: Edgar W. Trippett, Historical Information Concerning the Upper Flathead Country (Kalispell, MT:Trippett's Printing, 1971), pp. 57-58.]

In 1892-93, James Talbott's Northern International Improvement Company laid out a townsite near the North Fork coal mine at the mouth of Coal Creek, and built a steamboat called The Oakes to haul coal from the mine. However, the steamship capsized after getting only a short distance above the mouth of Canyon Creek, about 4 1/2 miles above the mouth of the North Fork. [Source: Charlie Shaw, The Flathead Story, (Kalispell, MT: U.S. Forest Service), pp. 51-52.]

In 1893, Mike Berne and five other men constructed a large raft at the mine site and floated several tons of coal down the North Fork (presumably at least as far as Columbia Falls). A second raft was wrecked and the coal was found to be low grade and not profitable to mine. (Ibid.)

The North Fork showed more promise as a navigable waterway for floating logs. The 1899 U. S. Geological Survey Annual Report contended:

- The river is drivable and most of it is navigable; otherwise, horse trails are the only means of travel used at present. [Source: H. B. Ayers, "The Flathead Forest Reserve", U. S. Department of the Interior, Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1899. Twentieth Annual Report of the U. S. Geological Survey, Part V, (Washington, D.C.), p. 283.]

The same kind of potential of the North Fork for log drives was noted by W. B. Greeley, District Forester, who assessed the chances for logging in burned sections of the Flathead Forest. He described the North Fork of the Flathead, (including the head of the river) as navigable "as is" or with improvement. [Source: Sanders County Ledger, November 13, 1910.]

Log drives on the North Fork were underway by the 1920's, if not before. Ed Neitzling noted that Roman Zeller logged the Dennis Sullivan homestead on Cove Creek in the 1900's and drove

the logs down to the main Flathead River and to a boom at the mouth of the river. [Source: Interview with Ed Neitzling by Gary Williams, Kalispell, Montana, September 11, 1984.] Another reference to logging on the North Fork is that of O. B. Calvin, one-time superintendent of Somers Lumber Company. He stated that the company had conducted log drives on the North Fork of the Flathead (1914-1920's) "but not far up". [Source: Interview with O. B. Calvin by Gary Williams, Kalispell, Montana, September 11, 1984.] In 1931, Hans Larson, who contracted with the Somers Lumber Company, drove logs down the North Fork from Canyon Creek. [Source: Hungry Horse News (Columbia Falls), June 28, 1963.]

Summary: Coal was taken down the North Fork on rafts from as high up as Coal Creek. Log drives began as far up as Cove Creek. The highest point of navigation by a steamboat was the mouth of Canyon Creek.

Flathead River, Main Stem

(Tributary of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River)

The main stem of the upper Flathead River begins at the confluence of the North and Middle Forks, runs southwest through Columbia Falls and enters Flathead Lake about 45 miles below where the South Fork joins the Middle Fork. The lower Flathead River leaves the south end of Flathead River near Polson, Montana, and flows south and then west for a total of about 75 miles before entering the Clark Fork River near Paradise, Montana.

Commercial navigation on the upper section of the main river consisted of steamboat traffic and log drives. The earliest known instance of navigation up the Flathead was associated with commercial navigation on Flathead Lake in 1883 or 1884, when a 20-ton sailboat, the Swan, sailed from Polson to Dooley's Landing, about 10 miles up Flathead River. A steam engine was placed on it in 1885 and it was renamed The Grant, which also reached some of the landings on the lower end of the Upper Flathead River. It and other steamers such as the Klondike, The Pocahontas (Dora), and The Crescent traveled up the lower end of the upper Flathead River to Demersville, about 20 miles up the Flathead River, generally regarded to be the head of navigation on the upper Flathead River from the late 1880's to 1892. [Source: Hugh J. Biggar, "The Development of the Lower Flathead Valley", Master's Thesis, 1951, pp. 98-107.] This traffic reached a high point in 1892 with the completion of the Great Northern Railroad to Kalispell and the demise of Demersville. During this period, The Crescent (launched in 1891), was designed to move the head of navigation to Columbia Falls. It made at least one run between Flathead Lake and Columbia Falls, hauling machinery for the Great Northern Railroad. (Ibid.) The steamer, the Lillian, also ran between Flathead Lake and Columbia Falls in 1891. [Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Seattle District, "Report of Findings on Navigability of Flathead River and Flathead Lake, Montana" p. 6; Degar Trippet, Historical Information Concerning the Upper Flathead Country (Kalispell, Montana:Trippet Publishers, 1971), pp. 59-60.]

There are only two recorded instances of navigation of the upper Flathead River by steamboat above Columbia Falls. In 1892, the Northern International Company constructed The Oakes, a seventy-five-foot, stern-wheel steamboat to transport coal from the North Fork Coal mine down the North Fork, Middle Fork and main Flathead River. With much difficulty (including the use of a winch), the crew was able to travel from Columbia Falls up the Middle Fork to the mouth of the North Fork in 1893. However, the boat foundered on the North Fork near Canyon Creek, broke loose from a mooring, and broke up. [Source: Charlie Shaw, The

Flathead Story (Kalispell: U.S. Forest Service, 1967), pp. 51-53.] In 1915 The City of Polson, 61 feet long and twelve feet wide, was "taken up" the Flathead River from Flathead Lake to McDonald Creek, and up McDonald Creek to McDonald Lake, where it was used to float the lake for a number of years. [Sources: Flathead Courier, June 24, 1915 as cited in Hugh J. Biggar, "The Development of the Lower Flathead Valley", Master's Thesis, Montana State University, 1950, p. 109; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, "Report of Findings on Navigability of Flathead River and Flathead Lake, Montana," circa 1975, p. 6.] It is not clear how much, if any of the Middle Flathead River was navigated when the City of Polson was "taken up" the river. It may have been transported over land, especially up McDonald Creek.

Log drives down the upper Flathead River included those down the North Fork and the Middle Forks which presumably floated the Flathead River to at least Columbia Falls and beyond. Log drives down the Middle Fork and the main stem included those of Earl Holister (from the mouth of McDonald Creek to Columbia Falls in 1906); Somers Lumber Company from three miles above Nyack to Flathead Lake in 1916 and from the Glacier Park boundary in 1923-24. [Sources: Interview with Ed Neitzling by Gary Williams, Kalispell, Montana, September 11, 1984; Hungry Horse News (Columbia Falls); The Interlake, April 23, 1961; interview with O.B. Calvin by Gary Williams, Kalispell, Montana, September 11, 1984.] George Slack, a contractor for the Somers Lumber Company, logged 30 million feet of logs on the Middle Fork in 1916/1917 and presumably floated them down the main stem to the Somers Lumber Company Mill on Flathead Lake in the spring of 1917. [Source: The Timberman, December 1916 and February 1917.] Log drives down the North Fork and the main stem included those of the Somers Lumber Company from 1914 to 1920, and 1931, the latter from Canyon Creek to Flathead Lake. [Sources: Interview with O.B. Calvin by Gary Williams, Kalispell, Montana, September 11, 1984; Hungry Horse News (Columbia Falls), June 28, 1963.]

A letter from the general manager of the Somers Lumber Company to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, dated July 22, 1915, provides a useful overview of the volumes of timber floated down the main stem of the Flathead River during the 1910's:

We manufacture about 70,000,000 feet of lumber per year. A very large percent of our raw material in the shape of saw logs is floated down the Flathead River. Of the 75,000,000 feet put in this last winter about 13,000,000 were put in the Flathead above Columbia Falls, about 30,000,000 were put into the Stillwater River and entered the Flathead River at Demersville, which is located just below Kalispell, about 10,000,000 were put in the river between Columbia Falls and

Demersville. In other words, 53,000,000 were floated down the Flathead River. We do not raft our logs in the river as is done on the sound, but send the logs down in large bodies in the form of drives and collect them in booms at the mouth of the Flathead River at Flathead Lake, where they are boomed out and towed to the mill at Somers . . . We have three tugs, and during the course of the year these tugs are sent with barges to various points on the river from Demersville down to buy supplies of hay and grain for use at our Somers plant as well as for use at our various logging camps, and also buy vegetables and cattle for use at our boarding houses. . . . [Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, "Report of Findings on Navigability of Flathead river and Flathead Lake", p. 7.]

An estimated 100 commercial vessels operated on Flathead Lake between 1883 and the early 1950's, carrying travelers and goods between the Upper and Lower Flathead Valleys. This traffic was especially heavy between 1883 and 1915 when the areas adjoining the lake were settled and before the general advent of the automobile. Most prominent of the lake-going vessels were the Swan (later the Giant), the Pocahontas, the Dora, the Tom Carter, the Crescent, the State of Montana, the Eva B, the Queen Mary S., the New Klondyke, the City of Polson, the City of Kalispell, and the Montana. The last four were built to take settlers up the lake after the "opening" of the Flathead Indian Reservation. [Source: Hugh J. Biggar, "The Development of the Lower Flathead Valley", Master's Thesis, Montana State University, 1951, pp. 98-112; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, Report of Findings on Navigability of Flathead River and Flathead Lake, Montana, pp. 5-6.] Vessels also included sailboats, logging tugs and square-bowed grain barges. Statistics cited in the Montana Almanac 1959-60, provide a general idea of the amount of traffic that crossed the lake in the late 1800's and the early 1900's:

in 1897, 363 tons of general merchandise, lumber, hay and grain, and 282 passengers were transported; in addition 20,000 railroad ties were floated out. In 1901, 311 tons of similar commodities and 2,221 passengers were transported with 60,000,000 board feet of saw logs floated out. By 1908, the volume had increased to 3,000 tons and 6,000 passengers. In 1912, 250,000 tons of miscellaneous merchandise, 4,500 tons of wheat and 14,000 head of horses and cattle were transported. [Source: The Montana Almanac, 1959-1960, p. 252, as cited in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Flathead River Navigability Report," p. 7.]

Steamboat traffic on the lake peaked in 1915 when settlement on the Flathead Indian Reservation was greatest and declined sharply afterward. Regular passenger and freight service between Somers and Polson ceased in 1930.

Lumber companies, especially the Somers Lumber Company, also used Flathead Lake for floating logs. The logs floated down the Whitefish, Stillwater, and Swan Rivers, were boomed and hauled across the lake to the Sommers Company Mill, where they were cut into railroad ties, lumber, etc. Logs dumped into the south end of the lake also were boomed and towed north, up the lake to the Somers Mill. Commercial traffic on Flathead Lake from 1930 to 1949 was almost entirely composed of logs and averaged about 58,500 tons per year. [Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, "Flathead River Navigability Report," pp. 6-8.] More recent navigation (circa 1950 to 1975) includes excursion boats and recreation floats. (Ibid., pp. 8-9.)

Commercial navigation on the lower Flathead River between the south end of Flathead Lake and the mouth of the Flathead River near Paradise was less extensive than that on the upper Flathead River or Flathead Lake. In 1896, about 1,000 ties were floated from the outlet of the lake over rapids and downstream to Jocko (Dixon), Montana. [Source: Inter-Lake, October 16, 1896, as cited in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Flathead River Navigability Report," p. 6.] Also Clarence C. Strong, a retired U.S. Forest Service employee stated that at least one major log drive began on the Flathead River, just below Kerr Dam. (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Flathead River Navigability Report," p. 6.)

In 1912, Dixon and Sloan Transportation Company built the City of Dixon, a 70-foot long paddle-wheel steamboat, with which the company intended to navigate the Flathead River between Dixon and the Buffalo Rapids Bridge (about 25 miles). In June 1913, the boat made a round-trip to Sloan, which is located at the mouth of the Little Bitterroot River. In June 1914, the boat made a round trip to Norrisvale (Buffalo Bridge) and one month later burned. [Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Flathead River Navigability Report," circa 1975, p. 6; J. McAlear and Sharon Bergman, The Fabulous Flathead (Polson, Montana:Treasure State Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 77-78.]

The 1932 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Report concluded that the entire Flathead River was non-navigable because there was no navigable connection in the form of boat traffic with navigable waters outside of the State of Montana. [Source: Chief of Engineers, "Report on Navigability of Flathead River below Flathead Lake," 1932, pp. 2-3.]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the main stream of the Flathead River as a Class I navigable

stream from its origin (the confluence of the North and the Middle Forks) to its confluence with the Clark Fork River.

Summary: There are recorded instances of log drives on the entire length of the upper Flathead River (between Flathead Lake and the confluence of the North and Middle Forks.) Steamboats reached as far as Columbia Falls and one may have reached the mouth of McDonald Creek. There are numerous recorded instances of steamboats, recreational and excursion crafts and tugs (pulling logs) navigating Flathead Lake since the early 1880's. Logs have been floated down the lower Flathead River (from the south end of Flathead Lake.) One steamboat navigated the lower Flathead River from Dixon to Buffalo Bridge, just below the present site of Kerr Dam.

Flathead River, Middle Fork

(Tributary of the Flathead River)

The Middle Fork of the Flathead River was first logged during the construction of the Great Northern Railroad in 1891-1892. About 20,000 ties were cut during that winter between Harrison Creek and Little St. Mary's Creek, although it is not known if any were driven. The 1899 U.S. Geological Survey Annual Report assessed the river's potential for commercial navigation by stating:

The river is drivable, and most of it is navigable, otherwise horse trails are the only means of travel used at present. [Source: H.B. Ayers, "The Flathead Forest Reserve", U.S. Department of the Interior, Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1899. Twentieth Annual Report of the U. S. Geological Survey, Part v, The Flathead Forest Reserves, (Washington, D.C.), p. 283.]

Although there was evidence of other cutting along the river, some of which had been landed and left in Logging Creek Slough, no timber had "been taken from the valley to market" (1899). (Ibid.)

The steamboat traffic that began on Flathead Lake in 1883 also journeyed up the main Flathead River, most of this traffic terminating at Demersville. However, there are only two recorded instances of a steamboat traveling up the Middle Fork. In 1892, the Northern International Company constructed The Oakes, a 75-foot stern-wheel steamboat, to transport coal from the North Fork coal mine down the North Fork, Middle Fork, and main stem of the Flathead River. With much difficulty (including the use of a winch), the crew was able to travel from Columbia Falls up the Middle Fork to the mouth of the North Fork in 1893. However, the boat foundered on the North Fork near Canyon Creek, broke loose from a mooring, and broke up. [Source: Charlie Shaw, The Flathead Story (Kalispell: U.S. Forest Service, 1967), pp. 51-53.] In 1915 the City of Polson (61 feet long and twelve feet wide) was "taken up" the Flathead River from Flathead Lake to McDonald Creek, and up McDonald Creek to McDonald Lake where it was used to float the lake for a number of years. [Sources: Flathead Courier, June 24, 1915, as cited in Hugh J. Biggar, "The Development of the Lower Flathead Valley", Master's Thesis, Montana State University, 1950, p. 109; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, "Report of Findings on Navigability of Flathead River and Flathead Lake Montana," circa 1975, p. 6.] It is not clear how much, if any, of the Middle Flathead River was navigated when the City of Polson was "taken up" the river.

It may have been transported over land, especially along McDonald Creek.

Most instances of commercial navigation on the Middle Fork involved log drives. In 1906, Earl Holister and a man named Hutton logged the Charlie Howe homestead on Lake McDonald, rafted the logs on McDonald Lake to McDonald Creek, and floated the logs downstream to their mill on the slough just southwest of where the Veteran's Home stands at Columbia Falls. [Source: Interview with Ed Neitzling by Gary Williams, Kalispell, Montana, September 11, 1984.]

The highest recorded point of log drives on the Middle Fork was in the vicinity of Nyack. The Somers Lumber Company used horses to skid logs to the river at Nyack during the winter and spring of 1916. Thirty-two-foot bateaux were used to drive the logs from Nyack to Flathead Lake and the Somers Lumber Company mill. The drive ran from May to July, a period of 96 days. [Source: Hungry Horse News, June 28, 1963.] According to John Huggins, one drive began three miles above Nyack in 1916. [Source: The Inter-Lake, April 23, 1961.]

According to O.B. Calvin, former superintendent at Somers Lumber Company, the company had log drives on the Middle Fork which began in the vicinity of the Glacier Park Boundary, about 1923-1924. [Source: Interview with O.B. Calvin by Gary Williams, Kalispell Montana, September 11, 1984.]

One mention of log drives on the Middle Fork include references to George Slack, a logging contractor, who "had a contract for putting practically 30 million feet of logs for the Somers Lumber Company" on the Middle Fork. [Sources: The Timberman, December 1916 and February 1917.]

Summary: The highest point of commercial navigation on the Middle Fork is three miles above Nyack, from where logs were floated to Flathead Lake. The City of Polson was "taken up" the Middle Fork to the mouth of McDonald Creek, which is apparently the highest point of steamboat navigation.

Flathead River, South Fork

(Tributary of the Flathead River)

There are two early references to fur trappers navigating or attempting to navigate the South Fork of the Flathead River. In the winter of 1896-97, six frenchmen trapped on the South Fork and in the spring rafted 2,700 marten pelts on the South Fork to Columbia Falls. They lost one raft at Devil's Elbow, just below the present site of Hungry Horse Dam. The story was related by John E. Lewis, an old time fur broker, to Charlie Shaw. [Source: Charlie Shaw, The Flathead Story (Kalispell:U.S. Forest Service, 1967), p. 129.] In 1904, trapper Charlie Fair and a partner, Ora Reeves, built a dug-out canoe near the mouth of Spotted Bear Creek to transport their furs down the South Fork. However, Fair drowned while crossing Spotted Bear River, and the canoe was never finished. Reeves packed the fur out. (Ibid., p. 63.)

Other references to navigability on the South Fork of the Flathead River are related to log drives. H. B. Ayers of the U.S. Geological Service provided the following 1899 assessment of the potential of the river for log drives:

The Valley of the South Fork of Flathead has also an outlet to the north, and the river may possibly be made drivable, although there is some doubt on the point, owing to the crookedness of several box canyons . . . The tributary valleys of the South Fork of the Flathead are more difficult to access, and it seems probable that chutes and flumes may be the best means of getting material out of the main valley. [H. B. Ayers, "The Flathead Forest Reserve," U. S. Department of the Interior, Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1899. Twentieth Annual Report of the U. S. Geological Survey, Part V, The Flathead Forest Reserves (Washington, D. C.), pp. 51-52.]

In commenting on the transportation potential of the South Fork of the Flathead River, Ayers notes:

The only way to get timber out of this region is northwestward, or down the stream. Were it not for several bad canyons, this river would be drivable for at least 80 miles about its mouth. It is possible these canyons can be improved so as to permit log driving, but the expense would be great. Elsewhere on the river driving would often be difficult because of the wide bed of the river and frequent gravel bars. (Ibid., p. 73.)

On the other hand, Ayers points out:

A railroad along the river could be built with easy grade, but the expense would be considerable, owing to frequent cut banks and ravines, and it is questionable whether the timber interests alone would warrant the construction of such a road. (Ibid.)

In 1910, W. B. Greeley, District Forester at Missoula, assessed the logging chances in the burned area of the Flathead Forest and described the South Fork of the Flathead River as navigable "as is" or with improvements. [Source: Sanders County Ledger (Thompson Falls, Montana), November 15, 1910.] O. B. Calvin, former superintendent at Somers Lumber Company, stated that the company had done log driving on the South Fork of the Flathead River. [Source: Interviews with O. B. Calvin by Gary Williams, Kalispell, Montana, September, 1984.]

Summary: Logs and furs have been floated an indeterminate distance down the South Fork of the Flathead. (The furs were floated from at least the present site of Hungry Horse Dam to the river's mouth.) Historical assessments of it considered it potentially navigable for a distance of about 80 miles above its mouth.

Fortine Creek

(Tributary of the Tobacco River)

Logging drives occurred on Fortine Creek from the late 1800's to about 1919. However, it is not clear where the highest point of navigation was located. Based on available evidence it appears that it was about 18 miles above the mouth of Fortine Creek, where Fortine Creek meets Graves Creek and becomes the Tobacco River. An April 1912 issue of The Timberman states that:

The farthestest logs are 32 miles from the mill in Eureka and 7 camps employing over 300 men will handle the drive of about 12 million feet of logs that are now ready for the river man. [Source: The Timberman, April 1912, p. 45.]

The 32 miles, minus the approximate eight mile distance of the Tobacco River between the confluence of Grave and Fortine Creeks and the mill in Eureka, makes the distance up Fortine Creek about 24 miles, although it is not clear but what the reference to the 32-mile distance might include not only the Tobacco River and Fortine Creek, but also one of Fortine Creek's major tributaries. It would seem, however, to mean the Tobacco River and Fortine Creek.

The highest point of navigation that is best documented involves the construction of a series of dams on Fortine Creek in 1905 to facilitate log drives. Camp 5 was built "just above the Fortine Creek and Swamp Creek junction" which would place the camp about 18 miles above the mouth of Fortine Creek. [Source: Marie Cuffe Shea, Early Flathead and Tobacco Plains (Kalispell, Montana:Thomas Printing, 1977), p. 180.]

Summary: The highest documented point of navigation on Fortine Creek is the mouth of Swamp Creek.

Gallatin River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

Historical evidence of commercial navigability on the Gallatin River exists for all but the four miles of the upper river between Taylor's Fork and the boundary of Yellowstone Park, and 14 miles of the lower river between Central Park (the junction of the Gallatin River, and the Burlington Northern Railroad tracks), and Three Forks. Zachariah Sales is known to have floated logs from his logging camps at Hell Roaring and Greek Creek, and at Taylor's Fork to his mill at Slab Town (Salesville, now known as Gallatin Gateway) sometime between 1865 and 1884. [Sources: Michael P. Malone, "The Gallatin Canyon and the Tides of History," Montana, The Magazine of Western History, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 4; Mary Sales Mills, "Zachariah Sales", Typescript dated 1939 in "Salesville and Zachariah Sales" envelope, McGill Collection, Montana State University Archives, Bozeman, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "West Gallatin Navigation Study," prepared for U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, pp. 7-8).

Walter Cooper, along with N. B. Holter and A. C. Johnson, established the Walter Cooper Company in 1904 and contracted with the Northern Pacific Railroad to provide ties and lumber. The company floated logs down the Gallatin River from Taylor's Fork to Central Park between 1904 and 1907. [Sources: Billings Gazette, July 9, 1968; Robert G. Dunbar, "The Economic Development of the Gallatin Valley," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, 47, No. 4, pp. 121-122; Bozeman Avant Courier, February 5, 1904, August 5, 1904, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 8.]

The State Court decision, Montana Wilderness Association et al. vs. The Board of Health and Environmental Sciences of the State of Montana, et al., Montana District Court 1st Judicial District, July 2, 1974. No. 37154, which ruled the Gallatin River navigable, relied heavily on evidence of these log drives and recreational use of the river in the decision. [Source: Newell and Williams, pp. 11-12.]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Gallatin River a Class I navigable stream from Taylor's Fork to the river's confluence with the Missouri River.

Summary: Commercial navigation of the Gallatin River in the form of log drives has been documented for all of the river except for the four miles between the mouth of Taylor's Fork (the high point of navigation) and the boundary of Yellowstone Park, and the 14 miles between Central Park and the mouth of the river.

Graves Creek

(Tributary of the Tobacco River)

There is considerable evidence of commercial navigability in the form of log drives on Graves Creek. However, it is not known where these numerous log drives originated. H. B. Ayers in the Twentieth Annual Report of the U. S. Geological Survey, noted about Graves Creek that:

The main stream is drivable in June, although very rapid and stony. It affords very few, if any, favorable chances for dams, and log driving would necessarily be limited to June, when the water is said to continue about 2 feet above its usual height during several weeks. [Source: H. B. Ayers, "The Flathead Forest Reserve", U. S. Department of the Interior, Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1899. Twentieth Annual Report of the U. S. Geological Survey, Part V, The Flathead Forest Reserves, Washington, D. C., p. 26.]

In 1900, Charles Palmer built a mill on Graves Creek "just below where Kuchan's dam and Rexford light plant 1949/50) are." [Source: Olga Weydemeyer Johnson, ed., for the Pioneers of Tobacco Plains Country. The Story of the Tobacco Plains Country - Autobiography of a Community (Caldwell, ID:Caxton, 1949/50), p. 225.] The sawmill sawed timber for the dam, which was constructed in 1904. Palmer also had logging crews and employed from 40 to 50 men at the mill and in the woods, most of them presumably up Graves Creek. (Ibid., p. 226.)

The Eureka Lumber Company cut and drove logs in the Graves Creek watershed in June 1913 and 1914 and in the summer of 1916.

A 1913 reference in The Timberman stated that:

the Company (the Eureka Lumber Company) began their drives on Graves Creek last week and the stage of water is reported to be excellent. [Source: The Timberman, June 1913, p. 51.]

A 1914 reference in The Timberman mentioned that:

The Eureka Lumber Company has just completed a most successful log drive of 30 million feet down the Fortine and Graves Creek which, together with what they have on hand and are getting in by rail will give them sufficient logs for a full seasons fun. [Source: The Timberman, June 1914, p. 61.]

The Eureka Company also drove logs on Graves Creek in 1916. The Timberman of August 1916 noted that:

Eureka Lumber Company of Eureka has completed their log drive on the Fortine and Graves Creeks, and has succeeded in getting enough logs with which to operate on a day and night shift late this season. [Source: The Timberman, August 1916.]

Summary: Although these references do not indicate how far up Graves Creek the drives originated, it would seem that they reached some distance up the stream in view of the apparent size and regularity of the drives.

Jefferson River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

The first recorded instance of commercial navigation on the Jefferson River was the Lewis and Clark expedition, which ascended the river in 1805. Captain William Clark ascended the Jefferson River in canoes from Three Forks to the mouth of the Beaverhead in July and August 1805. [Source: History of the Expedition Under the Command of Lewis & Clark, edited by Elliot Coues, Vol. II (New York:1893), pp. 449-505, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Navigation Study of the Beaverhead River; Jefferson River," prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, p. 5.] Upon the return trip in July 1806, Clark floated down the Beaverhead and Jefferson Rivers to Three Forks in three days. [Sources: Ibid; pp. 448-449 and Frank Haeman Garver, "Lewis and Clark in Beaverhead County," reprinted from the Dillon Examiner, December 10, 1913, pp. 11-12, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 6.]

In 1885-86, Dr. Asa Davison of Dillon, Montana built a steamboat, the Fern, on the Beaverhead River just above the Jefferson River, and in May of 1886 floated the craft down the Beaverhead, and the entire length of the Jefferson and Missouri Rivers to Townsend, Montana. The boat had little trouble floating the Jefferson River. [Source: Stanley R. Davison, "White Hopes of the Big Muddy," (Montana: The Magazine of Western History, Spring 1959), p. 4, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 10.]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Jefferson River a Class I navigable stream based on its current use by fur trappers and commercial guides and outfitters.

Summary: The Jefferson River has been navigated by canoe and steamboat from its headwaters (the confluence of the Beaverhead and Ruby Rivers) to its confluence with the Missouri River.

Kootenai River

(Tributary of the Columbia River)

Historical navigation of the Kootenai River is well-documented. The Kootenai Indians traveled up and down this river in canoes. The Upper Kootenais traveled to the Bonners Ferry area. [Source: Olga W. Johnson, Flathead and Kootenay (Glendale, CA:Arthur Clark, 1969), p. 183, as cited in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, "Report of Findings on Navigability of Kootenai River, Bonners Ferry, Idaho to Jennings, Montana," circa 1975, pp. 6-7.] Their travels included all of that part of the river in Montana. David Thompson, fur trader and explorer of the British North West Company, also traveled the Montana segment of the Kootenai River in 1808, 1809, 1810, and 1811. [Source: M. Catherine White, ed. David Thompson's Journals Relating to Montana and Adjacent Regions, 1808-1812 (Missoula:Montana State University Press, 1950), pp. 5-29, 33-41, 113-126.] Later trappers also used the Kootenai River to transport furs in the vicinity of the Fisher River. They included Nicholas Montour and William Kittson (1826-29). [Source: Johnson, Flathead and Kootenai, pp. 217-218, 229-230, as cited in U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Kootenai River Navigability Report," p. 7.]

The next significant period of navigation on the Kootenai River ran from about 1890 to 1925 and involved steamboats and log drives. The construction of the Great Northern Railroad to Jennings, in 1891, provided an "opportunity" to develop river transportation between Jennings, Tobacco Plains, and Fort Steele, B. C. In 1892, the Annerly, a small stern-wheel steamboat, was launched from about the mouth of the Fisher River and ran to about eight miles from Fort Steele in British Columbia. It operated between 1892 and 1897. [Source: Montana Institute of the Arts, Libby Writers Group, Inc., Libby, Mt. In the Shadow of the Cabinets: Early Kootenai Country (Libby, MT:Western News Publishers, 1976, p. 9-10).] Other steamboats included the Ruth, which was built and launched on the river at Libby in 1895 and carried ore between Jennings and the Fort Steele area until 1897. [Source: "Pioneer Steamboating on the Kootenai River in Montana," The Montana Magazine of History, Vol. II, No. 2, April 1952, p. 52.]

Log drives were conducted along almost the entire course of the Kootenai River. The early log drivers on the upper Kootenai in the Tobacco Plain region began in 1899 and at first floated all the way to Kootenai Lake in British Columbia. [Source: Donald Spritzer, Water of Wealth: The Story of the Kootenai River and Libby Dam (Boulder, CO:Pruett Publishing Co., 1979), p. 109.] In the early 1900's major log drives occurred along the Kootenai to the Stein Lumber Company Mill (later the Bonners Ferry Lumber Company) in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Settlers along

the Kootenai River, encouraged to file for land under the Stone and Timber Cutters Act, logged their lands and floated the logs during spring run-off down the Kootenai to the Bonners Ferry Mill. Drives originated on many tributaries along the Kootenai, "from Gold Creek and Elk River in British Columbia to Pipe Creek and Yaak River in Montana." [Source: Ibid., and Olga Weydemeyer Johnson, Early Libby and Troy, Montana, (Libby, MT:Western News Publishers, 1958), p. 67.]

Commercial logging outfits, including those of the Bonners Ferry Lumber Company, operated along the Kootenai River in Montana and floated logs to the Bonners Ferry Mill until 1924, when the Montana Legislature ruled that timber cut in Montana had to be milled in Montana. Again, these drives originated on the tributaries all along the Kootenai River from British Columbia and Montana, with most terminating in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Companies and timber operators included the Bonners Ferry Lumber Company in Canada (Gold Creek and Line Creek); the Lincoln Logging and Lumber Company, near Volcour, Montana; The Kootenai Valley Logging Company, near Warland, Montana; William E. Dawson Bonners Ferry Lumber Company above Jennings; Tri-State Cedar Company on Parmenter Creek; James Stonecrest, Rouse Brothers, and Brooks Brothers, near Tyro; William Savage and the Montana Cedar Company at Lake Creek; and the Brooks Brothers at Pipe Creek. Their drives were major ones involving millions of board feet annually. For example, the Bonner Lumber Company drive from Gold Creek in Canada to Bonners Ferry in 1914 involved 90 men and six boats (bateaux), and took about six weeks. River boats had to be hauled around Kootenai Falls, the only unnavigable portion of the river. [Sources: Johnson, Early Libby and Troy, pp. 91-92; The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman, November 1911, June 1913, December 1914, May 1914; American Lumberman, August 9, 1913; Montana Institute of the Arts, Libby Art Writers Group, Times We Remember In and Around Libby (Libby, MT:Western News Publishers, 1974) pp. 42-43.]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Kootenai River as a Class I navigable stream between Libby Dam and the Idaho border.

Summary: All segments of the Kootenai River in Montana have been navigated in connection with the fur trade and log drives. Steamboats have navigated the segment of the river between the mouth of the Fisher River the Fort Steele, British Columbia.

Little Blackfoot River

(Tributary of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River)

None of our investigations have yielded information to suggest that the Little Blackfoot River has been navigated commercially. However, a letter to Heritage Research Center dated December 10, 1986, from Helena District Ranger Denis A. Hart states the following:

Near the turn of the century, a small tributary of the Little Blackfoot River, called Flume gulch, was dammed in a series of Splash Dams for the transport of cordwood. The wood was then transported to the Elliston Railhead by flume. The ultimate use of the cordwood was for the Anaconda Smelter. [Source: Denis A. Hart, Helena District Ranger, USDA Forest Service, to Heritage Research Center, December 10, 1986.]

Little Missouri River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

There is evidence that Eber Bly floated ties for the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad down the Little Missouri River between the mouth of Cottonwood Creek (near Capital, Montana) and the Montana/South Dakota border, to Medora, North Dakota, in 1881. [Source: Bismarck Tribune, January 14, 1881; March 25, 1881; April 8, 1881; April 15, 1881; April 29, 1881; May 6, 1881; May 13, 1881; June 10, 1881; June 16, 1881; July 1, 1881; and October 7, 1881, as cited in Gary Williams and Alan Newell, "Little Missouri River Navigability Study," prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1975.] Other recorded instances of navigability on the Little Missouri River were in North and South Dakota.

Summary: Commercial navigation on the Little Missouri River has occurred between the mouth of Cottonwood Creek (the highest point of recorded navigation) and the Montana/South Dakota border.

Lolo Creek

(Tributary of the Bitterroot River)

There were several logging and mill operations in the Lolo area in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Log and tie drives on Lolo Creek began as early as 1887, and probably before. A November 5, 1887 item in the Missoulian mentioned that 7,000 ties were floated down Lou Lou (Lolo) Creek in October 1887. The article did not mention where the drives originated. [Source: The Missoulian, November 4, 1887.] A November 11, 1887 Missoulian article stated that W. E. Bass:

had 40 men driving logs on Lou Lou Creek under management of W. W. Fulkerson and by November 20 he had gotten 25,000 ties down creek. [Source: The Missoulian, November 11, 1887.]

In the early 1900's Richard Williams operated a sawmill at least three different locations on Lolo Creek and drove logs down the Creek to the mills. His earliest logging operations were on Tevis Creek. Soon after logging the area at Tevis Creek, he moved the mill to a point on the creek about five miles west of Lolo, near the Mormon Peak Road. Williams at times employed up to 30 men in the logging, driving, and milling operations. [Source: Lolo History Committee, Lolo Creek Reflections, pp. 29, 107-109.] In 1904, the mill burned and Williams rebuilt it further east on the western line of the Hollensteiner property, about four miles from the mouth of Lolo Creek. There he built a dam across the creek and drove logs to it. At that time, his logging operations were at Mill Creek. The drives covered a distance of about six miles to the Williams dam and mills. [Sources: Ibid., The Missoulian, April 2, 1905 and May 27, 1905.]

Summary: Commercial navigation on Lolo Creek has occurred in connection with log and tie drives between the mouths of Tevis Creek (the recorded high point of navigation) and Mill Creek to the Williams mills, about four miles, and five miles above the mouth of Lolo Creek. Reference to late nineteenth century log drives strongly suggests that the section between the Williams mills and the mouth of Lolo Creek also was driven.

Lower Deer Creek

(Tributary of the Yellowstone River (near Grey Cliff))

Among many creeks used for floating ties for construction on the Northern Pacific Railroad was Lower Deer Creek. The only mention of this commercial activity on the stream comes from a memoir published as part of the local history Pioneer Memories: Vol. II. Page 85 of that book contains the following statement:

In 1907 my father bought a relinquishment from a Mr. Maxwell for the sum of \$12.00 and this became the first permanent home for Will and Mary. Here they lived the rest of their lives and later died there. This home was about one and one-half miles west of the present day Grey Cliff on the Yellowstone Trail.

. . . Earlier he had helped with the famous "Tie Camp" at the head of Lower Deer Creek which provided ties for the N. P. Railway. He used his team and wagon to haul logs to the mill site and he also had the job of walking along the creek to break "Tie Jams" in the big Tie Drive. It was Spring season and high water time and the water was icy cold. He had no canvas waders such as we have today, so he had to go into the icy water-all six feet of him-wearing two piece red "long johns" and rubber boots. . . .

No other reference to commercial navigation on Lower Deer Creek was found in the course of this study. The highest point of navigation as suggested by the above writing would appear to be "the head of Lower Deer Creek."

Madison River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

The Madison River has experienced considerable use historically by explorers, trappers, miners, farmers and loggers, and is generally considered to have high potential for navigation. However, recorded entrances of commercial navigation are few.

In 1913, the Madison River Lumber Company cut timber on the Upper Madison at the mouth of the West Fork of the Madison and floated from 700,000 to 1 million board feet of timber from that area to the company's mill at Varney, a distance of 55 miles. [Sources: (Virginia City) Madisonian, May 9, 1913, July 4, 1913, July 25, 1913, August 8, 1913, September 19, 1913; Letter, Floyd W. Wilcox to Alan Newell, September 8, 1974, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Madison River Navigation Study," prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, pp. 8-10.]

The construction of Madison Dams at Ennis (No. 1 in 1900 and No. 2 in 1906) and the construction of Hebgen Dam below West Yellowstone have limited navigation of the river, although barges were used on Hebgen Lake in 1914 to transport supplies to the site at the dam from West Yellowstone.

The federal government does not consider the Madison River a navigable stream. However, in 1948, the Federal Power Commission required the Montana Power Company to license its power generating facility at Hebgen Dam under authority of section 4(e) of the Federal Water Power Act of 1935 which empowers the federal government with authority over non-navigable streams (in this case, the Madison) whose flow affects the navigable status of navigable streams (in this case, the Missouri River below Fort Benton). [Source: Opinions and decisions of the Federal Power Commission, Vol. 7, January 1, 1948-December 31, 1948 (Washington:1950), as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 13.] Even though the federal government does not consider the Madison River as navigable, recent state court decisions indicate a trend toward declaring a stream navigable on the basis of its recreational use. Both Hebgen Lake and the Madison River experience heavy recreational use. [Source: Newell and Williams, pp. 11-16.] The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Madison River as a navigable stream from Quaker Lake to its confluence with the Missouri River.

Summary: Commercial navigation has occurred on the Madison River in connection with log drives between the mouth of the West Fork of the Madison (the recorded high point of navigation) and Varney. Hebgen Lake also has been navigated. Without the obstruction caused by Madison Dams 1 and 2 below Ennis. It is

safe to assume that the Madison could have been navigated from the mouth of the West Fork to its confluence with the Missouri River.

Marias River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

Lewis and Clark encountered the Marias River in June 1805. Lewis ascended it for two days, but found the current too swift for descent with two small rafts. Recorded navigation of the river is limited to brief trips in steamboats and the floating of saw logs in the late 1800's.

In 1865, twelve companies were organized to establish a town (Ophir) at the mouth of the Marias River for the purpose of developing the country from Three Forks to the Kootenai country. The Ophir Ferry Company was established to run a ferry across the Marias River at any point within three miles of the river's mouth. Those involved also used the steamer, the Cutter, to commence construction of Ophir and apparently made trips of an indeterminate distance up the Marias River to get materials (mostly logs) for this purpose. [Source: Tom Stout, Montana: Its Story and Biography (Chicago and New York: The America Historic Society, 1921), pp. 337-338.] However, the town organizers were killed by Indians at a timber camp "a few miles up the Marias," where oxen had hauled logs for the town's construction to the river, and the enterprise collapsed. (Ibid.)

The steamboat, the Penina, traveled .5 miles up the Marias River from its mouth in 1877 to pick up 325 bales of buffalo robes because of the bad condition of the roads. [Source: Fort Benton Record, May 25, 1877, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams "Marias River Navigation Study", Montana, prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1975, p. 6.] In 1891, the Little Joe, a small Missouri River steamer, ascended the Marias River to haul coal from a railway bridge about five miles above the river's mouth to a dredge boat on the Missouri River. [Source: Fort Benton River Press, July 22, 1891, p. 6, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 7.]

There are three recorded instances of wood drives on the Marias River - 1882-1883. Juneaux and Mathe floated 35 cords of wood down the river on two rafts in 1882. The same year, Bourassa and Cavanaugh drove between 1,000 and 1,100 cords of wood down the river. However, the newspaper articles on these drives did not mention the length or where the timber was cut. [Source: Fort Benton River Press, June 14, 1882 and August 23, 1882, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 7.] In 1883, John Houston drove about 1,000 cords of wood to his brickyard, but again, the length of the drive and the location of where the timber was cut were not given. [Source: Fort Benton River Press, April 18, 1883; as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 7.]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Marias River as a Class I navigable stream from Tiber Dam to its confluence with the Missouri River.

Summary: Steamboat navigation is documented to five miles above the river's mouth, the highest recorded point of navigation. Log drives have occurred on the river for indeterminate distances.

Milk River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

Edward Denig, a fur trader on the Upper Missouri (1833-1856) noted that:

it (Milk River) is fordable on horseback the year round, except at the time above mentioned (the spring), or when swollen by continued rains, and it might even be navigated with Mackinaw boats, when full, though the undertaking would be attended with some risk, owing to the large quantity of drift-wood, snags and other obstructions. [Source: Edwin Thompson Denig, Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri (Norman:University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 63.]

Recorded instances of navigation are few and only second-hand. Billy Cochran, who worked for the Northwestern Fur Company, is believed to have rafted about 1700 wolf furs down the river to the Missouri River in 1868, while he and his party were under attack by Indians. [Source: A.J. Noyes, In the Land of Chinook: Or the Story of Blaine County (Helena, MT:1917), pp. 82-85, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Milk River Navigation Study," prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1975, p. 8.] However it is not known how much of the river was navigated. Available documentation suggests that floating furs on the Milk River was an unusual practice, and that furs were usually transported down the Milk River by wagon to the Missouri River and loaded onto steamboats there. [Source: Newell and Williams, p. 8.]

There was apparently an attempt in the 1890's to build a steamboat in Glasgow to be used in floating buffalo bones down the Missouri River to market. The boat was constructed at the Sam Blanchard sawmill. W. A. King was "overseer", Clarence Beede was engineer, and Nels Cotton was chief mechanic. The craft was named the Enahbruh and was 80 feet long and 14 feet wide. It was floated down the Milk River from the Blanchard place to the Missouri, but was unsuccessful in operating on the Missouri and was seized by creditors. [Source: Montana Federation Women's Clubs, Local Community History of Valley County, Montana (Glasgow, MT:1925), pp. 23-24.]

Summary: There is one recorded instance of a steamboat traveling down the Milk River from about Glasgow to the mouth of the river. Furs apparently were floated down the river in 1868, but for an indeterminate distance.

Missouri River

The Missouri River is generally considered a navigable stream from the Montana/North Dakota border to its headwaters at Three Forks. There is considerable historical documentation of commercial navigation on the river in Montana. Lewis and Clark navigated this river in pirogues and bateaux to the Great Falls in 1805. (See the numerous editions of "The Journals of Lewis and Clark".) At least one party descended the Missouri from Three Forks to the existing state line in 1806. Manuel Lisa traveled up the Missouri to the mouth of the Big Horn River in 1807 and returned from it to St. Louis in 1808. His St. Louis Missouri River Fur Company sent an expedition up the Upper Missouri River in 1810. There is a record of one party of the expedition floating an indeterminate distance from Three Forks toward the Great Falls that year. [Source: Thomas James, Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans (St. Louis:1966), p. 66, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, Missouri River Navigation Study Loman, Montana, to Three Forks, Montana, prepared for U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, pp. 8-9.] The fur trading companies made extensive use of the Missouri River from the time of Manuel Lisa's first trip up the Missouri until the 1860's.

Light-draft steamboat, the "Chippewa", was the first steamboat to travel to Fort Benton, arriving there in 1860. [Source: Hiram Martin Chittenden, History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River; Life and Adventures of Joseph La Barge, Vol. 1 (Minneapolis,MN:1962), pp. 219-221, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams "Missouri River Navigation Study, Loma, Montana to Three Forks, Montana," prepared for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, p. 11.] Between 1860 and 1880, about 400 steamboats arrived at Fort Benton. [Source: Federal Power Commission, Opinion and Decisions of the Federal Power Commission, Vol. VIII, January 1, 1948, December 31, 1948, (Washington D.C.:1950), p. 171, as cited in Newell and Williams, pp. 11-12.]

Commercial navigation of the Missouri above the Great Falls developed about the same time steamboat traffic to Fort Benton was coming to an end. A. M. Holter's Lumber Company rafted sawed timber from its lumber mill on Stickney Creek, which was 70 miles upstream from Great Falls. [Source: Great Falls Tribune, February 18, 1888; A. M. Holter, "Pioneering Lumbering in Montana; Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana (Vol. VIII, Helena:1917), pp. 270, 271; the Fort Benton River Press, April 13, 1881, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 14.] The Holter Company rafted about 300,000 feet of lumber from its mills on Stickney and Megher Creek to Great Falls in 1885 and floated logs to Great Falls from those creeks until 1891. [Source:

Holter, "Pioneer Lumbering in Montana", p. 272; the Great Falls Tribune, August 9, 1890, as cited in Newell and Williams.]

William F. Wheeler and a crew of five used a rowboat to float the Missouri from Stubbs Ferry (near Helena) to the Great Falls in 1878 in an effort to determine if its upper reaches were navigable. [Source: Stanley K. Davison, "White Hopes of the Big Muddy," Montana, The Magazine of Western History (Spring 1959), p. 2; Helena Weekly Herald, September 26, 1878, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 18.] A large steamboat, the Fern, floated from Twin Bridges on the Beaverhead, down the Beaverhead, Jefferson, and Missouri to Townsend in June 1887. Three Forks, which the Fern passed by on its descent, constitutes the highest point of navigation. [Source: Davison, White, Hopes on the Big Muddy, pp. 5 & 6, as cited in Newell and Williams, p. 19.] Between September 28 and November 7, 1887, the Fern floated from Townsend to Great Falls. [Source: Ibid., and the Great Falls Tribune, November 9, 1887, as quoted in Newell and Williams, p. 19.]

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has declared the Missouri River navigable from the Montana/North Dakota State line to Three Forks, Montana. The United States Coast Guard exercises jurisdiction over the Missouri River to a point 263 miles above Fort Benton, Montana (33 CFR 238 - 1, 1967). The Federal Power Commission, which licenses dams, considers the Missouri River as a navigable river to Three Forks, Montana. [Source: Federal Power Commission Reports, Vol. VII, January 1948-December 1948, Washington:1950.] The case of Montana Power Company vs. Sutherland 74 (Mont. 587) established the Missouri as navigable in Lewis and Clark County and the state case of Gibson vs. Kelley (15 Mont. 417) established that the Missouri River is navigable in Choteau County at T23North, R7East. (Newell and Williams, pp. 21-22.) The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Missouri River as a Class I navigable stream from Three Forks to the Montana/North Dakota border.

Summary: The Missouri River has been navigated in connection with a variety of activities and by a variety of river crafts from its headwaters at Three Forks to the Montana/North Dakota border. It also has been declared a navigable waterway between these points by the federal government.

Montour Creek (Montare Creek)

(Tributary of the Blackfoot River)

There is evidence that logs were floated down Montour Creek to the Blackfoot River and down the Blackfoot River to Bonner for milling in the 1880's. According to a senior paper prepared by David Crabtree (no date), Ralph Kilburn, who ran a contract logging outfit in 1887, "began cutting on Montour Creek west of Ovando, Montana. Cutting and hauling was done in the winter using oxen to skid the logs and horses to pull the loads to the river. In spring, the logs were driven down Montour Creek to the Blackfoot and thence to Bonner. Kilburn logged on Montour Creek for three years." [Source: David Crabtree, "Logging on Lubrecht Forest Prior to 1934," Senior Thesis, Montana State University, no date, p. 13, on file at University of Montana Archives and Special Collections.]

Sometime in the late 1800's or early 1900's Henry Clinton McNally attempted a log drive down Dick Creek, a tributary of Montour Creek, with the intent of driving the logs down Montour Creek to the Blackfoot River and down it to the Bonner mill. He dammed Dick Creek and dynamited the dam to allow logs to be washed down Dick Creek. However, they jammed and did not reach Montour Creek. [Source: Hazel Jacobsen, Profile of Early Ovando 1878 to 1900 (Platten Press:Deer Lodge, MT, 1977), pp. 6-8.]

Summary: It would appear that Montour Creek was used for floating logs to the Blackfoot River for transportation to the Bonner mill. It is not known where logs were cut on Montour Creek or how far they were floated.

Nine Mile Creek

(Tributary of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River)

There is documented evidence of a log drive on Nine Mile Creek from 1896 through 1908. A March 31, 1896 article in the Missoulian mentions a drive of H.W. McLaughlin that year. At the date the article appeared (March 31, 1896), 1-1/2 million feet of logs had been floated to his mill (the exact location of which is not known), and about an equal amount of logs remained upstream, waiting to be floated down. [Source: The Missoulian, March 31, 1896.]

In 1898, McLaughlin helped found the Western Lumber Company, which, in 1900-1901, built a mill at Lothrop, about four miles below the mouth of Nine Mile Creek. [Sources: The Missoulian, December 12, 1926; The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman, April 1900.] The company also built a dam on Nine Mile Creek for holding logs. (The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman, November 1900 and March 1901.) A plat map prepared by the Big Blackfoot Milling Company shows a pond located on Nine Mile Creek about one mile north of the Clark Fork River. [Source: Plat Book 191, Anaconda Forest Products Papers, K. Ross Toole Archives, University of Montana.]

The first drive down the creek to the new mill occurred in 1901. (The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman, March 1901.) A November 1903 issue of the Timberman stated that, "(The Western Lumber Company) drive their logs from down Nine Mile Creek and Missoula River, a distance of about 20 miles. The mill cuts about 50 million feet annually." [Source: The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman, November 1903.]

Log drives down Nine Mile Creek continued through at least 1908.

It is not clear where the log drives down Nine Mile Creek started. The November 1903 item in the Timberman suggests a 20-mile drive to the mill, which would put navigable portions of the creek about 16 miles upstream from its mouth. A plat map of Township 17 North, Range 24 West prepared by the Big Blackfoot Milling Company about 1900, shows cuts made near the headwaters of Nine Mile Creek, although they may not have been made by the Western Lumber Company.

However, other evidence suggests logging was done about eight miles up Nine Mile Creek in the early 1900's. A February 19, 1902 letter from Kenneth Ross, manager of the Big Blackfoot Milling Company, to Charles Russell, superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Division of the Northern Pacific Railway Company, written at a time when Western Lumber Company was building the

Lothrop mill, suggests that the Northern Pacific Railroad ran a spur line eight or ten miles up Nine Mile Creek so the logs could be freighted to Bonner and cut there, or to Lothrop for milling there. [Source: Letter, Kenneth Ross, Manager, to Charles Russell, Superintendent, Rocky Mountain Division, Northern Pacific Railway Company, Missoula, February 19, 1902, Box 5, Book 11, pp. 153-154, AFPP C#5, Toole Archives, University of Montana.] An October 1905 article in The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman also states that the company was considering using a steam logging tractor the next season to haul logs on the creek eight miles to the mill because there had not been enough flow in the stream in 1905 to get all the logs to the mill.

Summary: Documentary evidence suggests that navigable segments of Nine Mile Creek appear to run from its mouth on up approximately 16 miles, and possibly to headwater tributaries.

Rattlesnake Creek

(Tributary of the Clark Fork of the Columbia River)

The first recorded instance of navigation on Rattlesnake Creek is that associated with the Wiles and Decker sawmill, which relocated to Missoula from Frenchtown in 1871. Local newspaper reports, as cited in the Clarence Strong papers at the Toole Archives of the University of Montana, state that the Wiles and Decker mill was erected near the mouth of Rattlesnake Creek and a contract to furnish logs was signed with George Montgomery. Montgomery and a man named Miller constructed a boom across the Hellgate (Clark's Fork) River at the mouth of the Rattlesnake to catch logs floated down the latter stream. While lifting the boom during high water in 1871 to permit driftwood to pass through, a raft of approximately 60 logs escaped downriver. [Source: Missouliau (Missoula and Cedar Creek Pioneer), Feb. 16, 1871 and May 11, 1871.]

The sawmill was inactive in May and June of 1871 due to high water. By September, however, the mill advertised in the Cedar Creek Pioneer that it was selling lumber. (Missoula and Cedar Creek Pioneer, Sept. 7, 1871) Nothing was learned of the portions of Rattlesnake Creek floated for this enterprise, and nothing more is known of the mill itself.

There are no available references to commercial floating of Rattlesnake Creek for the period from 1871 to 1883. In 1883 Alfred J. Urlin of the Missoula Lumber Company filed for a water right on Rattlesnake Creek ". . . 4-1/2 miles above town where hills come within a few feet of water, being 300' above head of Agnew Moore's ditch; water to be used for floating timber and for irrigation in Urlin's addition." [Source: Missoula County Courthouse records, March 29, 1883, as cited in Clarence Strong Papers.] Whether he actually navigated the stream is not known.

On July 10, 1883, The Missouliau reported the following:

Tom Greenough, a tie-contractor, has finished clearing the Rattlesnake Creek of driftwood for a distance of seven miles. He expects to float about 20,000 ties down the stream during the middle stage of water (in the late spring) for the N.P. Railroad.

Summary: From the above-cited information, it appears that Rattlesnake Creek was considered a navigable stream for a distance of at least seven miles. While the actual Greenough tie drive in 1883 was not documented, it is reasonable to conclude that the effort was made.

Sage Creek

(Tributary of Sandy Creek)

Grit, Guts and Gusto, A History of Hill County, published by the Hill County Bicentennial Commission in 1976, includes a 1956 article from the Liberty County Times which references an 1854 Fort Benton journal that states that trappers "sought" to float furs in "crude rafts" from the Sage Creek crossing to Fort Benton. Trading parties generally reached the crossing in February and wintered there, living off of the buffalo, until the spring thaw when the furs were floated down Sage Creek. [Source: Woody Laughnan, "Gildford: A growing and Prosperous Town", Liberty County Times, 1956, as it appears in Grit, Guts and Gusto: A History of Hill County (Havre, MT:1976), published by the Hill County Bicentennial Commission, p. 106.]

It is not clear how furs could have been floated to Fort Benton because Sage Creek flows into Sandy Creek, which is a tributary of the Milk River. The Milk River flows into the Missouri River far downstream from Fort Benton. The traders may have floated the furs to the mouth of Sage Creek and then transported them overland to Fort Benton.

Summary: This vague reference to navigation on Sage Creek would indicate the highest point of navigation on the Milk River if it could be substantiated. The highest point of navigation on Sage Creek would be "Sage Creek crossing", with navigation to the mouth of the stream.

Sheep Creek

(Tributary of the Smith River)

The A.H. Holter Company and the Butte and Montana Commercial Company of Great Falls used Sheep Creek to float timber from the Little Belt Mountains to the Smith River in the early 1890's. The timber was floated on the Smith River to the Missouri and Great Falls, where it was milled and sold. The Holter Lumber Company cut logs at the head of Sheep Creek in 1890, floating about 3.5 million board feet during high water down Sheep Creek to its mouth. [Source: "Pioneer Lumbering in Montana," Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana, Vol. VIII. Helena: 1917, pp. 258-259; Delores Morrow, "Our Sandiest Roots: A History of the Forest Products in Montana," Montana Historical Society, p. 10; Great Falls Tribune, May 6, 7, 10, 1890, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Smith River Navigation Study," prepared for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, p. 3.]

In 1891, the Butte and Montana Commercial Company built two dams on Sheep Creek for floating logs down the creek to its Great Falls mill. The company succeeded in floating four million board feet of logs down Sheep Creek using water released from these dams in June. The company also performed some channelization work. As nearly as can be determined, the dams were built about 19.6 miles above the mouth of the creek. A 1981 U.S. forest Service report found evidence of splash dams on Sheep Creek, just below the mouths of Moose Creek, Allen Gulch, and Deadman Creek. The latter is about 25 miles above the mouth of Sheep Creek. [Source: George Charles Knight, "Testing Archeological Inferences at an Historical Logging Site in Montana," U.S.D.A. Forest Service, Northern Region, July 1981, pp. 10, 65-71.] The logs were milled at the company's Great Falls mill for use in the construction of its Butte smelter and the Black Eagle Falls dam. [Sources: Meagher County News, June 19 and August 28, 1891 and August 30, 1890; Great Falls Tribune, March 32 and June 18, 1891; Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 2, 1892; Society of Montana Pioneers, edited by James V. Sanders, 1899, p. 202, as cited in Newell and Williams.]

Summary: Sheep Creek appears to have been navigated following construction of splash dams, for a distance of from 12 to 25 miles between its mouth and its headwaters. The highest point of navigation is probably Deadman Creek.

Smith River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

Instances of commercial navigation on the Smith River include Ira Meyers and his partner, E.G. Maclay, who drove logs down the Smith River from 1884-1888. It is not clear where the log drives began, but they probably started at the timbered regions of the river basin, which are located about 45 miles upstream from the river's mouth. They drove the first logs to Fort Benton in 1884 and to the city of Great Falls in 1886, 1887, and 1888. [Sources: Fort Benton River Press, June 4, 1884; June 25, 1884; July 2, 1884; July 16, 1884; August 6, 1884; and Great Falls Tribune, April 3, 1886; June 11, 1887; July 18, 1887; and February 18, 1888, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Smith River Navigation Study," prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1974, pp. 6-7.]

The A.A. Holter Lumber Company conducted a log drive down the Smith River in 1890. They floated about 3.5 million board feet down Sheep Creek to the Smith River, down the Smith to the Missouri, and then to their mill in Great Falls. Meyers and Holter supplied the timbers for the rapid growth in the Great Falls area, which included the need for timber in the construction of Great Falls, the construction of the Boston and Montana Smelter in Great Falls, and the Black Eagle Falls Dam. [Sources: "Pioneering Lumbering in Montana," Contributors to the Historical Society of Montana, vol. VIII (Helena: 1917), pp. 258-259; Great Falls Tribune, March 29, 1890; May 6, 1890; May 7, 1890; May 10, 1890; and May 20, 1890, as cited in Newell and Williams, pp. 8-9.]

In 1891, the Butte and Montana Commercial Company built a mill in Great Falls and constructed two dams on Sheep Creek to facilitate floating logs to Great Falls. The company used the dam to float about four million board feet of timber down Sheep Creek to the Smith River, down the Smith from the confluence with Sheep Creek to the Missouri River and the firm's Great Falls mill. The company conducted a similar drive in 1892. [Source: Great Falls Tribune, June 18, 1891 and June 19, 1891; Meagher County News, June 19, 1891 and August 28, 1891; Rocky Mountain Husbandman, June 2, 1892, as cited in Newell and Williams, pp. 9-11.]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Smith River a Class I navigable stream from Camp Baker Fishing Access site near Fort Logan, to its confluence with the Missouri River based on its heavy recreational use.

Summary: The Smith River was used for the commercial floating of timber on the segment between its mouth on the Missouri River to an area at least as high as Sheep Creek.

Stillwater River

(Tributary of the Flathead River)

Historical documentation for the Stillwater River indicates that the stream was navigated on the "North Fork", the "Middle Fork", and the "Lower Fork" for commercial purposes associated with logging and lumbering. The documentation states that logs were floated down the river from as far north as the Upper Stillwater Lake. Most of this activity occurred between 1900 and 1930, and most of it was conducted under Somers Lumber Company contracts to Henry Good. Following are some citations referencing that activity.

The B & M (Boston and Montana?) Company erected one of Kalispell's earliest sawmills on the Stillwater River in 1890 and dammed the river to create a mill pond. [Source: Henry Elwood, Kalispell, Montana and the Upper Flathead Valley (Kalispell: Thomas Printing, 1980), p. 156.] Apparently, another mill was constructed in 1898 on the Stillwater just north of Kalispell by two men named Lepert and Burns, with most logs for the mill floated down the Stillwater River. [Source: Shaw, The Flathead Story, p. 123.] A 1901 article claimed that 30 million board feet of logs were in the Stillwater and Whitefish rivers that year, and that the drive would last for about 40 days. [Source: Columbia River and Oregon Timberman, May, 1901, as cited in the Clarence Strong Papers in the Toole Archives.]

Following are additional references from the Clarence Strong Papers:

In 1911 Henry Good, described as one of the leading logging contractors in the district, was said to have six million feet of burned timber along the middle fork of the Stillwater River (Timberman, June 1911). The Timberman of November, 1912, stated that the Somers Lumber Company, for whom Good did most of his contract logging, was constructing a dam on the "north fork of the Stillwater River" to be used in connection with a log drive the following spring. The Timberman in December, 1913, said that Henry Good was putting approximately 20 million feet of logs into the Stillwater to be floated down the Stillwater and Flathead rivers to the Somers Lumber Company mill on Flathead Lake. The same journal reported January 11, 1913, that the Somers Lumber Company completed a 150-foot dam on the "middle fork" of the Stillwater River, the water to be used to assist log drives down the middle fork. In June, 1914, the same journal stated that the Somers Lumber Company was unable to get all of its logs out of the middle fork of the Stillwater River due to low water. The log drive on the Stillwater River in that year resulted in a law suit filed by Mrs. Matilda Anderson against the Somers Lumber Company, claiming damage from floating logs on the stream and

alleging that the Stillwater was not navigable. While the outcome of that particular lawsuit was not available, it is known that the river drives continued for many years beyond that date. (The Timberman, April, 1914.) The Timberman reported in January, 1914, that Henry Good was operating camps on both the "lower fork" and the upper "middle fork" of the Stillwater River where the cut timber was "banked." That journal stated in February 1916, that the Somers Lumber Company had purchased a large tract of timber on the Upper Stillwater River from the North-Western Lumber Company of Kalispell whose mill site was included in the agreement. At the time of the report, it was not known whether the Somers Company would erect a new mill at Kalispell or drive the timber to the mill on Flathead Lake. The journal reported in December, 1916, that logs for the Somers Lumber Company mill were banked along the Flathead and Stillwater Rivers, indicating that the logs from the Stillwater were to be driven down the river, into the Flathead River, and into Flathead Lake. In a 1984 interview with Ed Neitzling by Gary Williams, Mr. Neitzling stated that his brother, Fred, had worked for Henry Good driving logs down the Stillwater River circa 1916 or 1917. He indicated that the drive went down Logan Creek and into the Stillwater near Olney. He also recalled that Ward McMillan and his father had constructed a dam on Logan Creek between 1910 and 1915. The Timberman reported in September, 1918, that Henry Good had three camps near Lupfer and planned on operating ten camps during the winter. He had been awarded a contract from the Somers Lumber Company to log twenty million feet of timber from the "Stillwater District." The river drives continued into 1922 when a January article in The Timberman stated that nine logging camps, operating under subcontractors to Henry Good, employed 300 men along the Stillwater River in getting out approximately 20 million feet of timber for the Somers Lumber Company. And in November, 1923, The Timberman reported that Henry Good obtained a contract from the Somers Company to "put a large amount of logs into Upper Stillwater Lake." The company intended to build a dam on the lake to facilitate the operation. The Hungry Horse News, of Columbia Falls, reported on June 28, 1963, an interview with 88-year old Herb Watkins of Kalispell. Watkins claimed to have worked for Henry Good for eleven years as a logging foreman and said, "That river (Stillwater) doesn't move, and so we had to build three dams, and use them to flush the river." Those logs went to the Somers Lumber Company.

Henry K. Good, son of the logging contractor, provided information for an article about his father that appeared in the 3rd Annual Big Sky Loggers Championship, a publication for the 1978 championships held at Kalispell, Montana. The article claims that Henry Good built his logging enterprise between the years of 1893 and 1928. Good logged the Stillwater drainage from 1901 until 1928. He ceased his log drives in that latter year due to increasing competition from trucking operators. Following is Henry K. Good's description of the log drives on the

Stillwater River from the above-mentioned publication:

When spring came and the snow-fed lake and river rose, logs were floated down the Stillwater as far as the Northwest Dam, which was located near what is now Seventh Avenue East North and Riverside Drive northeast of Kalispell.

At the damsite logs were sent through a special chute and floated to the Flathead River, down Flathead Lake to Somers. There they were held in booms on the lake until needed in the mill.

Getting the logs to the Somers mill was not a simple task. The logs were held in booms on Stillwater Lake and released in sequence. Of course, the logs floating along at the whim of the river did not always float straight down to the Northwest Dam, but hung up on curves, rocks, sand bars and each other, causing jams and generally giving the loggers plenty of trouble. The point and pike men tried to keep the logs going, working with heavy peavys. Men in bateau boats came along behind, freeing logs stuck to banks and getting them back into the stream.

Summary: Available documentation indicates that the Stillwater River was used extensively for commercial navigation associated with logging and lumbering. While dams were built to facilitate many of those log drives, it is not known whether the dams were necessary, or simply aided the process. Information for the earlier mills along the Stillwater did not state whether dams had been used. The documentation indicates that the Stillwater River was floated for commercial log drives at least as high up as the upper Stillwater Lake, and that tributaries to the river also were driven.

Sun River

(Tributary of the Missouri River)

The first recorded instance of commercial navigability on the Sun River occurred in 1887, when the firm of Jurgens and Price floated ties for the construction of the Great Northern Railroad from above the canyon on the North Fork of the Sun River to the mouth of the river. [Source: (Sun River) Rising Sun, June 22, 1887; Great Falls Tribune, July 11, 1887; July 19, 1887; September 22, 1887; Rising Sun, August 10, 1887, September 14, 1887; Tribune, August 17, 1887, September 22, 1887, and October 11, 1887, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Sun River Navigation Study," U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974, pp. 8-9.]

Also in 1887, John J. Ellis, part owner of the Sun River Sash, Door & Blind Factory, used the Sun River to float cord wood from somewhere above the point where Jurgen and Price floated the railroad ties to the mouth of the Sun River in 1887, 1890, and 1891. [Source: Rising Sun, October 5, 1887; Fort Benton River Press, May 14, 1890, October 7, 1891, as quoted in Newell and Williams, p. 9.] The firms of Mulligan and Harris, and Smith and McBean also floated cord wood down the Sun River in 1890. [Source: Rising Sun, May 7, 1890; September 3, 1890.]

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Sun River a Class I navigable stream from Gibson Dam to the confluence of the river with the Missouri River.

Summary: Commercial navigation on the Sun River occurred in connection with floating of railroad ties and cord wood over a segment of the stream beginning at its mouth and extending above the canyon on the North Fork of Sun River.

Swan River

(Tributary of Flathead Lake)

The Swan River between Swan Lake and Bigfork on Flathead Lake was used to float about 100 million feet of timber from Swan Lake to Flathead Lake between 1914 and 1919. Logging and the logging drives were supervised by J. E. Craney of the Somers Lumber Company. [Source: Henry Elwood, Kalispell, Montana, and the Upper Flathead Valley (Kalispell, MT:1980), p. 200.]

In the Swan Lake area, logs were hauled by railroad, and some floated, to the head of Swan Lake where they were decked, rolled into the river, and floated across the lake to a boom on the lower end of Swan Lake. From here, the boom was opened and the logs were floated 20 miles down the Swan River to Flathead Lake at Bigfork. They were again boomed and hauled by tug to the Somers mill. [Source: Martha Craney Wiberg and Edmund B. Craney, "Swan Lake, Montana: 1914-1919"; The Columbia River and Oregon Timberman, September 1918, from the Clarence Strong Papers, pages unnumbered.]

Summary: Swan River was navigated for a distance of approximately 20 miles from its mouth to Swan Lake. Swan Lake itself was navigated in connection with the same commercial floating of timber.

Ten Mile (Tenmile) Creek

Tributary to the Missouri River

The Helena Independent of June 18, 1886, (p. 4, col. 2) includes a brief reference to ties being floated down Ten Mile Creek for construction of the railroad between Helena and Rimini. No other references to that activity on Ten Mile Creek were found, and there was no citation for the head of navigation.

Teton River

(Tributary of the Marias River)

Commercial navigation of the Teton River occurred in the 1880's and 1890. Dan McKay drove cord wood down the Teton River in June 1884, probably from the North Fork of the Teton River, just above its confluence with the main branch (river mile 195.7), to a boom at Settle's ranch, about 17.5 miles above the mouth of the Teton River. [Source: (Fort Benton) River Press, June 25, 1884; July 9, 1884; June 23, 1884, and August 20, 1884; interview with Jess L. Leeson, Choteau, Montana, October 24, 1874, as cited in Alan Newell and Gary Williams, "Teton River Navigation Study," prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, p. 6.]

In 1887, the firm of Hall and Frazier cut ties for the Great Northern Railroad at the headwaters of the river and floated them (an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 ties) to the mouth of the Teton River. [Source: (Sun River) Rising Sun, May 5, 1887; July 20, 1887; Great Falls Tribune, July 28, 1887; (Sun River) Rising Sun, June 22, 1887, and interview with Jess L. Leeson, Choteau Montana, October 24, 1974, as cited in Newell and Williams.]

In 1890 the firm of Grant and Ross cut timbers at the mouth of James Creek on the North Fork of the Teton River for the construction of the Great Falls and Canada Railroad. They floated about 75,000 ties down the North Fork of the Teton River and the river's main stem to the Great Falls and Canada Railroad crossing at Muddy Creek (about 80 miles). [Source: Great Falls Tribune, May 27, 1890 and June 10, 1890; interview with Jess L. Leeson, Choteau, Montana, October 24, 1974, as cited in Newell and Williams, pp. 7-8.]

Summary: The Teton River was navigated by commercial tie and cord wood drives on the segment of the stream extending from its mouth to its confluence with its North Fork. Floating originated at least on the mouth of James Creek on the North Fork of Teton River.

Tobacco River

(Tributary of the Kootenai River)

There is considerable evidence of log drives down the Tobacco River from its headwaters (the confluence of Fortine and Graves Creek) to the Eureka Lumber Company mill in Eureka (see Fortine Creek report). However, we found no documented evidence of log drives down the Tobacco River from the Eureka Lumber Company mill to the mouth of the river (its confluence with the Kootenai River). It is probably safe to assume that this lower portion of the Tobacco River was either navigable or capable of navigation of the timber for the early log drives. The Twentieth Annual Report of the Department of the Interior (1899) states that:

Tobacco Creek will be drivable after some expenditures for clearing the channel of driftwood and building the necessary dams. [Source: H. B. Ayers, "The Flathead Forest Reserve", U. S. Department of the Interior, Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior for Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1899. Twentieth Annual Report of the U. S. Geological Survey, Part V., The Flathead Forest Reserves, Washington, D. C.]

There is clear evidence that logs were floated down to the mill from Trego, a distance of about nine to ten miles from the mouth of Fortine Creek. The Baker Brothers in 1914 contracted with the Eureka Lumber Company "for putting several million feet of logs into the river in the vicinity of Trego and Fortine". [Source: The Timberman, December 1914, p. 71.] There are also references to drives occurring on Deep Creek, [Source: The Timberman, November 1914, p. 68] Graves Creek, [Source: The Timberman, June 1913, p. 51] and Sinclair Creek, [Source: The Timberman, March 1915, p. 47], all tributaries of Fortine Creek but closer to the mouth of Fortine Creek than is Swamp Creek.

Historically, dams have been used to float logs down Fortine Creek (see above references to dams).

Summary: Commercial log drives have occurred on Tobacco River for the entire length of the stream between Eureka and its Fortine and Graves Creek tributaries. Navigation of the approximately two-mile segment between Eureka and the Kootenai River was not documented, although the character of the stream suggests that it may have been susceptible to such use.

Tongue River

(Tributary of the Yellowstone River)

The first recorded commercial navigation on the Tongue River occurred in 1879-1880 with the floating of logs cut by Broadwater, Hubbell, and Company from about 120 miles upriver to the mouth of the Tongue River at Miles City. [Sources: (Bozeman) Avant Courier, April 3, 1879; (Miles City) Yellowstone Journal July 31, 1879, August 14, 1879, March 27, 1880, April 17, 1880, April 24, 1880, as cited in Gary Williams and Alan Newell, "Tongue River Navigation Study" (Montana and Wyoming), prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1970, pp. 5-8.] In 1881, the same company floated ties down the Tongue River. The tie camp was located up the Tongue River in the area that is now the Custer National Forest and the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation. [Source: Yellowstone Journal, October 15, 1881, October 29, 1881, January 14, 1882, as cited in Williams and Newell, pp. 8-9.] General Land Office field notes of Township 2 South, Range 44, (near present-day Ashland) as prepared by George Scheets, September 19-24, 1884, refers to timber cut in the area by the "Timber and Railroad outfits". [Source: General Land Office, Vol. 129, Block 1992, Field Notes of Subdivision Lines of Township 2 South, Range 44 East, by George Scheetz, September 19-24, 1884.]

Logs, ties, and lumber also were floated down the Tongue River in Wyoming between a point four miles above Dayton to a sawmill at Ranchester, about 15 miles, between 1893 and 1906. J.H. McShane of Omaha ran this operation. [Sources: USGS Nineteenth Annual Report: 1897-98, Part V, pp. 180-181; Robert F. Strail, "The Old McShane Tie Camp and the Rockwood Fire," Annals of Wyoming, XXX, 1960, pp. 147, 149; Sheridan Post, April 9, 1912, p. 8; March 25, 1913, p. 3; May 6, 1913, p. 7; and June 3, 1913, p. 6, as cited in Williams and Newell, pp. 12-13.)

Summary: The Tongue River has been commercially navigated in connection with log and tie drives from about 120 miles above its mouth to its confluence with the Yellowstone River. It also has been navigated by logs upstream in Wyoming (from four miles above Dayton to Ranchester) which suggests that it has been capable of being navigated from the Wyoming/Montana border to its mouth.

Whitefish River

(Tributary of the Stillwater River)

Commercial navigation on the Whitefish River consisted of log drives, generally commencing in the Whitefish Lake area and running to sawmills in the Kalispell area or to the Stillwater and Flathead Rivers and mills on Flathead Lake. In 1890/91 the Boston and Montana Commercial Company built a sawmill on the south end of Whitefish Lake to:

maintain such lake and river water level, that logs could be driven to a sawmill being built by the company a mile east of Kalispell . . . In the summer of 1891 this same Boston and Montana Company that had built the dam at the foot of Whitefish Lake completed its sawmill on the Whitefish River east of Kalispell townsite. [Source: Betty Schafer and Mable Engelter, Stump Town to Ski Town: The Story of Whitefish, Montana (Whitefish: The Whitefish Library Associates Inc. 1973), p. 12.]

Presumably, the Baker Brothers drove their logs along the Whitefish River from Whitefish Lake to its mouth and their mill east of Kalispell.

In about 1905/1906, the Baker Brothers sold their mill on Whitefish Lake to O'Brien Lumber Company and built another one east of town. A number of lumber companies operated in the area. Each spring, they drove "logs down the Whitefish River into the Stillwater and Flathead." Dorothy Johnson, noted Montana author from Whitefish, described the log drives of the early part of this century in notes loaned to the Whitefish Library Association:

Lumber companies were thick around Whitefish in those days and used to cut their logs on the lake then raft them down to the dam in great booms with steam and gasoline tug boats. Then when the logs reached the lower end of the lake they were held there till spring. When the ice went out in April or May and the water was running full and the river was swift and unhindered, then they used to have 'Log Drives.' They must have had them for at least ten years after we came to Whitefish before the timber was gradually thinned out and the mill at the dam took care of all that was left. [Source: Ibid., p. 66.]

The Northwestern Lumber Company, the State Lumber Company, and the O'Brien (subsequently the Somers Lumber Company) were the major lumber companies in the Whitefish and Kalispell area, and

it appears that all of them drove logs down the Whitefish River to the Stillwater and Flathead Rivers and/or to the Flathead Lake. Henry Elwood's Kalispell, Montana, and the Upper Flathead Valley notes that:

Logs decked and dumped into the Stillwater, Whitefish, Swan, and the various branches of the Flathead River were caught at the mouths of the Flathead and Sugar Rivers where log booms held them for crews that sorted out the logs and stumps before they were gathered behind a tug, held together by a boom, and pulled to the big mill at Somers. [Source: Henry Elwood, Kalispell, Montana and the Upper Flathead Valley (Kalispell, MT:Thomas Printing, Inc., 1980), p. 160.]

According to Ed Neitzling of Kalispell, the State Lumber Company drove logs on the Whitefish River in the early 1900's to about 1910. [Source: Interview with Ed Neitzling, by Gary D. Williams, Kalispell, Montana, September 11, 1984.]

Whitefish Lake also was used commercially by recreational sight-seeing boats during the early 1900's. In 1906, the Butte, a large boat shipped in from Indiana, was used on the lake for this purpose. According to the Whitefish Pilot, boating on Whitefish was "quite the thing" by 1906. The newspaper noted that:

C.E. Davis will have quite a float of boats on had at the Lake View Hotel for those who wish to avail themselves of a trip on the Lake but have no boat . . . There has been considerable talk of organizing a boat club this season and no doubt one will be formed. [Source: Whitefish Pilot, March 23, 1906 as cited in Schafer and Engelter, p. 41.]

The Whitefish Launch and Boat Club was in fact organized in 1908. Members of the club bought and operated a number of Mullins Steel motor boats (the longest one of which was 24 feet) on the lake. [Source: Schafer and Engelter, p. 41.]

Summary: The Whitefish River has been navigated in connection with log drives from its headwaters at Whitefish Lake to its mouth on Stillwater and Flathead Rivers. Whitefish Lake has been navigated in connection with log drives, and excursions and sightseeing.

Yaak River

(Tributary of the Kootenai River)

The commercial navigability on the Yaak River began in about 1900 and lasted for about 20 years. Such activity commenced in the form of log drives on the Yaak River at the time the Stein Lumber Company and its successor, the Bonners Ferry Lumber Company, began driving logs down the Kootenai River and its tributaries to their mill in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. These drives, in turn, began in earnest when homesteaders logged their land, dragged the logs either to the Kootenai River or its tributaries, and then floated them to Idaho during the spring run offs.

James Stonechest had a logging contract for the Bonner's Ferry Lumber Company to cut timber in the Kootenai National Forest about 20 miles north of Troy Montana, in 1911. He ran a logging camp during the winter of 1911-12 and successfully completed the operation in March 1912. [Source: (Libby) Western News, December 7, 1911; December 28, 1911; January 4, 1912; January 29, 1912; March 7, 1912.] The December 7, 1911 article indicated that Stonechest intended to drive the logs down the Yaak River to the Kootenai River and then to the Bonners Ferry Mill. If Stonechest's operation was 20 miles north of Troy, it would have been located near the mouth of Cyclone Creek. Notices for bids on sale timber in 1911 also indicate that timber was being cut up the Yaak in this area. At least one of these was in Township 35N, R33W, which would put the area of the cut at least as far north as the mouth of Cyclone Creek. The 220-acre strip also located in Township 34N, R 33W, ran from the Yaak bridge to the Olson Ranger Station. A 60-acre area also was advertised for bids in Township 34N, R33W and was "located on both sides of Fourth of July Creek, about one half mile above its mouth." [Source: The Western News, November 23, 1911.] Presumably the timber cut was driven down the Yaak River to its mouth and beyond.

The Fourth Homestead Act of 1906 and promotional efforts of the Great Northern Railroad brought settlers to the isolated Yaak River area. These settlers, including Frank Boggs and a man named Benning, drove logs down the Yaak to the Bonner Mill in the early 1900's. [Source: "Yaakers" Special Collections 192, Montana Historical Society Archives, p. 37.] Boggs drove "one million on the Yaak to the Kootenai" in 1913. [Source: The Timberman, June 1913.] Drives were going on as late as 1916, when it was noted that Jim Page, a superintendent of the first log drive of the Bonners Ferry Lumber Company in 1916, took two years to complete the job because of low water. It is not known how far up these log drives began, although settlers floating logs apparently experienced the problem of the logs jamming up at

the falls. However, it is not clear how far above the falls these drives extended. [Source: Turner, p. 118.]

Summary: Commercial navigation has occurred on the Yaak River in association with log drives. Drives originated at unknown locations above Yaak Falls, possibly as high up as Fourth of July Creek, and covered the entire distance to the mouth of the stream.

Yellowstone River

The Yellowstone River has been declared navigable from Emigrant, Montana to its mouth at the Montana/North Dakota border, by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. Navigation of the river involved Charles LeRaye, a French-Canadian, who was transported up the Yellowstone between the mouth of the Big Horn and the mouth of the Stillwater River by his Indian captors. [Source: Charles LeRaye, "The Journal of Charles LeRaye" in South Dakota Historical Collections, Vol. IV (Sioux Falls, S.D.:1908) p. 175, as cited in Gary Williams and Alan Newell, "Yellowstone River Navigability Study (Fort Union Historic Site, North Dakota, to Gardiner, Montana," prepared for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, 1974.) In 1866 a party of the Lewis and Clark expedition built canoes near present-day Park City and floated the river. [Source: Elliot Coues, History of the Expedition under the Command of Lewis and Clark: Original Manuscript Journals and Field Notebooks of the Explorers (New York:1893), pp. 1148-1149, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 8.]

In 1807, Manuel Lisa and his trappers ascended the Yellowstone from its mouth to the mouth of the Big Horn River and in 1808 floated from the mouth of the Big Horn to St. Louis. [Source: Richard Edward Oglesby, Manuel Lisa, and the Opening of the Missouri Fur Trade (Norman, OK:1963), pp. 54, 62-63, as cited in Williams and Newell.] In 1810, General Thomas James floated from the mouth of the Shields River (near present-day Livingston) by canoe to the Missouri River. [Source: General Thomas James, Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans, ed. by Milo Milton Quaife (New York:1966), pp. 88-91, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 9.] Fur traders William Ashley and Jedediah Smith (1825) and Nathaniel Wyeth (1833) navigated the Yellowstone River between the mouth of the Big Horn River and the mouth of the Yellowstone River transporting furs. [Sources: Harrison, Clifford Dale, ed., The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific, 1822-1829 (Cleveland:1918), pp. 161-162; Nathaniel J. Wyeth, The Correspondence and Journal of Captain Nathaniel J. Wyeth, 1831-1836, ed. by F. G. Young (Eugene:1899), pp. 210-212, as cited in Williams and Newell, pp. 10-12.]

In 1864, 83 miners floated the Yellowstone River from Emigrant Gulch to about 20 miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone in mackinaw boats. [Source: Charles Larpenteur, Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri (New York:1898), p. 364, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 13.] In 1864, the Territorial Legislature specified Emigrant Gulch as the head of navigation in granting a charter to N. P. Langford, Sam Word, and others to set up a telegraph line between Virginia City and the head of navigation of the Yellowstone. [Source: E. S. Topping, Chronicles of the Yellowstone (St. Paul:1883), pp. 28-29, and Tom

Stout, ed., Montana: Its Story and Biography (Chicago:1921), p. 284, as cited in Williams and Newell.] In 1865, between 300 and 500 persons were transported down the Yellowstone River in a variety of 42 flatboats, including mackinaw-style boats, from near Emigrant Gulch to the mouth of the Yellowstone and down the Missouri River to Sioux City, Iowa. [Source: J. Allen Hosmer, A Trip to the States by Way of the Yellowstone and Missouri (Virginia City, MT:1867), p. 9, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 15.] In 1866, two fleets totaling 21 flat-bottom boats, floated from Emigrant Gulch to St. Charles, Missouri in about a month's time. [Source: John C. Anderson, Mackinaws Down the Missouri: John C. Anderson; Journal of a Trip from St. Louis, Missouri to Virginia City, Montana, and Return, 1866 (Logan, UT:1973), p. 58, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 16.]

Steamboat navigation of the Yellowstone began in 1865 when General Sully, on a punitive expedition against the Sioux, ascended the Yellowstone to the Big Horn River in the light-draft steamboat, the Chippewa Falls. [Source: Granville Stuart Forty Years on the Frontier, Vol. II (Cleveland, OH:1925), p. 26, as cited in Williams and Newell, pp. 16-17.]

Steamboating on the Yellowstone by the Army continued in the 1870's with the Key West reaching the mouth of the Powder River from Fort Rice in 1873. [Source: Joseph Mills Hanson, The Conquest of the Missouri (Chicago:1910), p. 180, as cited in Williams and Newell, p. 17.] In 1875, Captain Grant Marsh piloted the steamer, the Josephine, 418 miles up the Yellowstone from its mouth to about present-day Billings, which proved to be the highest point of steamboat navigation on the Yellowstone. [Source: Ibid., pp. 195-221.] During and after the Sioux Wars in 1876, steamboats serving the U.S. Army reached the mouths of the Powder River and Big Horn River. (Ibid.) Steamboating on the Yellowstone fell off drastically after the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad after 1883, but continued between the mouth and Glendive until about 1910.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has declared the Yellowstone River a navigable river from Emigrant, Montana to the Montana/North Dakota border. The State Case RCM 1947, ff67-302, 67-712, Roe vs Newman 50a p2d 844 declared the Yellowstone River as navigable in Section 5, Township 1 South, Range 26 East, in Yellowstone County. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks considers the Yellowstone River a Class I navigable river from Yellowstone Park to the North Dakota border.

Summary: Documented evidence of commercial navigation on the Yellowstone River exists for the entire segment from the mouth of the stream to Emigrant, Montana. Additional boating by outfitters or guides, according to the Fish, Wildlife and Parks class I navigable status, probably has occurred on the stretch between Emigrant and Yellowstone National Park.

APPENDIX

Appendix

Navigability Study KEY WORDS

Following is a list of key words given to researchers to use when reviewing the published materials included in the research bibliography.

Logging/lumbering terms
Tie drive
Log drive
River drive
Rafting
Floating
Splash dam
Wanigan
Skidding
Hauling/sledding/sleighing
Lumber Co.
Sawmill
Mill
Mill pond/pond
Spring freshet
River
Stream
Lake
Specific names of waterways
Boats/Boating terms
Boat
Canoe
Mackinaw
Bullboat
Steamboat/Steamer
Raft
Ferry
Sail
Float
Navigate

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